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NOVEMBER 20 1981

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The whirling Tory dervish

By Stephen Koss

R. F. FOSTER:

Lord Randolph Churchill
A Political Life

431pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £16.
0 19 822 679 9

In 1874, the twenty-five-year-old Lord Randolph Churchill, third son of the sixth Duke of Marlborough, arrived at Westminster to take his seat for Woodstock. "I heard one of the lower orders, who were there in crowds, say 'there is a rum specimen', evidently alluding to me," he wrote to his newly acquired American wife. "I was so angry and should like to have been an Assistant King for the moment and executed him summarily." The incident and Churchill's intemperate response were like symbolic. As a proponent of Tory Democracy, whatever that meant, Lord Randolph ought to have been more tolerant of the man in the street. Though he never became an Ashantee King, surely one of his lesser disappointments, he quickly proved himself the parliamentary equivalent of a whirling dervish.

The coming man who never came, Lord Randolph was indeed "a rum specimen": brazen, impulsive, unprincipled, and unabashedly cynical, yet commended by a refreshing candour and a wayward charm. R. F. Foster, who has portrayed him in this "political life", adeptly illuminates the transcendent weaknesses without discounting the undoubted strengths. For, as the *Pull Mall Gazette* discerned in 1886, Lord Randolph reflected nothing so much as "the permanent ambiguity of his position", partly self-inflicted, but partly dictated by the confines of contemporary political culture. By implication, the other High Politicians of that day - and perhaps any day - were pretty rum specimens too.

Foster's subtitle is doubly apposite. He has distanced himself from the conventional biographical approach to present a personality whose "private life, as his public one, was largely dominated by politics." To underscore this point, each chapter is introduced by an evocative epigraph from a political novel (usually Trollope) and carries the word "politics" in its title: from "Family Politics: 1849-1859" to "Wilderness Politics: 1888 to 1895". As these boundaries would indicate, the treatment takes "a cyclical form" with the early and final stages of Churchill's career "compressed" to allow for more exhaustive examinations of the tumultuous decades in between. The structure is admittedly artificial, as any biographical exercise must be. Nevertheless, it works triumphantly. At last, Lord Randolph, whose previous biographers were determined to iron out his twists and turns, emerges as a three-dimensional figure, credible if not always creditable.

It is Foster's singular achievement to have rescued his subject from the multi-volume sepulchre erected in 1906 by the young Winston Churchill, who wrote with "filial piety" and, when the case required, "supernatural eloquence" as well. In an epilogue, which T. S. Eliot regarded as preview last January, Foster demonstrates the self-serving nature of Winston's penmanship, which was "at least partially intended as a vindication of the political somersaults being executed by the author at the time of writing". Aided by his illustrious predecessor or simply following the accustomed path of least resistance, a more recent biographer was content to apply a further coat of "biographical varnish, borrowing the texture of previous layers to build up a warm and glowing patina." By contrast, Foster begins afresh. His aim is not to "retrace the ground" littered with shop-worn anecdotes of dubious authenticity but rather to go to Lord Randolph "in the light of contemporary opinion and contemporary practice." This necessitates "trying to

penetrate behind the great formal epic of his son's biography".

The methodology suits the purpose, and possibly fortified it in the process. Foster has devoted "as much attention to the papers of other politicians, and to political journalism, as to the massive and beautifully articulated archives in Churchill College"; in this respect, he has used the unpublished diary of Louisa Harcourt ("that astute juvenile") and the Rothschild bank records to particularly superb advantage. In addition, he has consulted Lord Randolph's speeches as extensively reported in the press "instead of in the form prepared by his publicist and political sidekick", Louis Jennings, "in 1888".

These techniques, with an emphasis upon private as distinguished

anything about this". The legend that Churchill was a popular leader of the House is tellingly disputed, as is the notion that he was naturally sympathetic to the Irish cause. Here, Foster contradicts the view of John Vincent and A. B. Cooke that Churchill, who "knew Ireland at first hand... reflected seriously on Irish questions, showing some willingness to pursue ideal solutions for their own sake and at some personal cost". To the contrary, argues Foster: "What Churchill was actually saying was rarely as pro-Irish as it seemed to be, though he asserted himself an Irish expert and referred on every possible occasion to a first-hand knowledge of the country."

Paternal admonitions were a family tradition among the Churchills. Randolph, who was later to write



Lord Randolph Churchill at the India Office

from public testimony and a focus upon partisan activity within a rarefied arena, signal Foster's affiliation with the school of High Politics, which has done so much to challenge state assumptions. Founded at Cambridge in the 1960s, the school now boasts a thriving branch at Bristol. To be sure, its members subscribe to no uniform curriculum: they are far too talented and too idiosyncratic besides. Their common denominator is an impatience with interpretations that hinge on ideology, which they see as invariably subordinate to forces of personal ambition. Some of them, one may infer from their pronouncements in books and reviews, would take exception to the extent to which Foster has relied on newspaper comment. Maurice Cowling, the doyen, has in fact questioned the utility of biography as an analytical tool: "It abstracts a man whose public action should not be abstracted. It implies linear connections between one situation and the next."

Undaunted, Foster has written the sort of biography to warm Cowling's heart or, failing that, to give him pause for reflection. Lord Randolph Churchill emerges from these crowded pages as the prototypical High Politician, who proclaimed to a bushy dinner-party: "What brings men to the front is much more opportunity than character." He exploited issues, colleagues, and family to gain position, and he owed his rise to power and certainly not to want of opportunism - but to a series of tactical miscalculations. It would have flattered him to know that Gladstone admired his "nimble-mindedness", but concluded that "he has not a single grain of conviction in him except in the abstract". Similarly, he would have been delighted with the tone and thrust of Foster's book.

Written with astringency, but never acerbity, this "political life" permits Churchill to speak chillingly for himself. "Balticism is played out and the time is come for a 'generous policy'", he insisted in 1888, soon after he had instructed a confidante not to "retrace the ground" littered with shop-worn anecdotes of dubious authenticity but rather to go to Lord Randolph "in the light of contemporary opinion and contemporary practice." This necessitates "trying to

such wounding ones to Winston, was soundly rebuked by his own father:

As you get older you will find yourself, if you do not control your tongue, always quarrelling, unpopular and with few friends. . . . To tell you the truth I fear that you yourself are very impatient and resentful of any control; and while you stand upon some fancied right or injury, you fail to perceive what is your duty and allow both your language and manner a very improper scope.

Lord Salisbury could not have put it better.

As an undergraduate at Oxford, Randolph showed an aptitude for chess, which his wife was to see replicated in his political moves. He did a great deal of hunting and an amount of drunken "royalties", before he began to cultivate the electors at nearby Woodstock, just outside the dual gates. In 1873, after a three-day courtship, he married Josephine Jerome, a nineteen-year-old heiress, whose beauty was more tangible than her dowry. He anticipated "a peaceful bumpy life with no particular occupation", but she thought otherwise: "I should like you to be as ambitious as you are clever, and I am sure you would accomplish great things." Given that Churchill was too clever by half, his ambition defied measurement.

"If the most important thing about Lord Randolph Churchill's background is that it was dual", Foster observes, "the second most important thing is that it was impoverished." With his wife beside him on the platform, he had the effrontery to denounce the Parnellite reliance on "Yankee gold". To ease his financial embarrassments, he hoped for a junior appointment from Disraeli, who did not oblige him. In attacking Bradlaugh, Churchill may well have had a "personal interest" beyond theology, in that Bradlaugh inveighed against the system of state pensions that paid successive dukes of Marlborough £4,000 a year.

Health and money, the twin themes that dominated Churchill's personal life over more than that of most people, were inextricably mixed. By the mid-1880s, "the world of Trollope, never far from Churchill", had shifted from Phineas Finn to *The Way We Live Now*, a

crucial factor being "the importance of an official salary". Denied one, Churchill embarked on reckless speculations and a "roving commission" for the *Daily Graphic*. In spite of occasional antisemitic gibes, the friendship of Jewish financiers was indispensable to him. In 1888, he "turned for everything" to Rothschild, to whom he owed £66,000 when he died.

Rothschild, much less Randolph's debt to him, received no mention in the index to Winston Churchill's biography. There was yet another subject on which Winston was still more reticent. From March to October 1882, Randolph was incapacitated by "a mysterious illness... which, eventually, in the form of General Paralysis brought on by syphilis, finished his career". Winston glossed over the early breakdown and melodramatized beyond recognition the circumstances of his father's death. His own son, sixty years later, persisted in mourning Lord Randolph as the tragic victim of a "severe mental disease". Qualified historians have been equally oblique or sententious. Henry Pelling, for example, reveals only that "the nature of Randolph's illness, once it was diagnosed, was such that he could no longer claim his conjugal rights", leaving Lady Randolph to look elsewhere. But the facts are clear enough, however awkward it might be that Frank Harris first divulged them.

Before 1882, Churchill's "priority was to make a figure". After illness struck, "insubordination turned into a coherent effort to supplant his leadership and parliamentary lurking turned to a distaste for what he had come to see as timewasting at Westminster". Churchill, who memorably quipped that Gladstone was an old man in a hurry, was himself a younger man driven by the same furies of debility and mortality. In his accelerating race against time, he contracted an assortment of trinitoloy alliances, not all with men who might be classified as belonging to his own side. But, then, which side was he on? As depicted in the cartoon which adorns the book's dust-jacket, Lord Randolph jauntily straddled the fence, his feet dangling in the air.

His boon companions included Labouchère and Dilke, Hyndman ("the Marxist man-about-town"), and Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. Among the journalists who thrilled to his "genius for vulgarization" were Northwick of the *Morning Post*, Henry Lucy (who puffed him in the *Observer*, the *Daily News*, and the *Punch*, only to be "deliberately cut" in retaliation for an article he did not write), the garrulous T. H. S. Escott, and, up to a point, John Morley, E. T. Cook, and Chenery of the *Times*. From his mother, whose maxim was "feed the press", he had learnt the value of newspaper. No politician of the century since the days of Mr Milner Gibson studied newspapers, whether published in London or in the country, with the same catholicity and care as Churchill, declared Escott. These efforts paid dividends in the case of the Fourth Party: largely a creation of the publicists, it "embodied nothing but a negative", according to Lord Rosebery, and - on both counts - may be said to have set the pattern for fourth parties down to the present.

In Lord Salisbury's first administration, Churchill served as Secretary of State for India. Morley was not alone in suspecting that the Prime Minister had "selected the India Office for his irrepressible colloquy merely in order to intern him where he can do little or no mischief". (Did Campbell-Bannerman "later" send Morley to that "gilded cage" for the same purpose?). Although Blunt predicted "a great future for any statesman who will preach Tory Democracy in India", Churchill reverted to the coercive and expansionist policies of Lord Lytton. His disparagement of Indian spokesmen as "Bengalee Baboos" foreshadowed

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his son's smug references to Gandhi.

In the aftermath of the Home Rule split, Salisbury formed his second government, with Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the Commons. On fiscal matters, he adhered to an orthodox (ie. Gladstonian) line. The ministry, "strongly Old Gang in flavour," was essentially "packed" against him, and he felt isolated and bored. "Very private," he scribbled to Balfour across the Cabinet table: "How dull this is. I am getting sick."

Churchill relieved the monotony by meddling in his colleagues' departmental affairs. That, too, was a family trait. His intrusion into the sphere of foreign policy was calculated to infuriate Lord Lansdowne, formerly Sir Stafford Northcote and (in Churchill's opinion) a "cretin" by any name. "While Salisbury interpreted the general thrust of Churchill's policy as being anti-Constantinople, it may principally have been anti-fidelsleight," suggests Foster. On December 20, 1896, Churchill resigned ostensibly over defence estimates, but with a pointed swipe at the Foreign Office. Salisbury called his bluff, allowing *The Times* - which withheld editorial support from Churchill - to inform

the Queen, the country, and Lady Randolph. Contemporaries saw the manoeuvre as "a bid for leadership," and Foster is inclined to agree.

This dramatic episode is dissected with precision, detachment, and buoyant humour. Churchill's mother was assured that Salisbury was "very fond" of her son, whose erstwhile associates "would do anything to get him back." But, Foster cautions us, such effusions were "far more indicative" of the way Tory politicians spoke to duchesses than of how they viewed their ex-Chancellor. Churchill could more easily overcome the resentment of Lord Salisbury, who tagged him "the Archfiend," than that of Lady Salisbury, whom he had insulted by rising from the table at Hatfield and muttering "bad dinner, cold plates, beastly wine." The canard that Churchill somehow "forgot" Goschen in plotting his resignation strategy is swiftly brushed aside: he had nominated Goschen for the Home Office the previous year and had dined with him in Salisbury's company two nights earlier.

Exiled to the wilderness, Churchill continued his flirtation with Chamberlain, who became less and less a natural ally. He professed random sentiments that Winston wilfully mis-

took for doctrines of Tory Socialism. Most of all, he brooded. "I am the greatest philosopher going now," he was heard to remark plaintively in 1893. "I live on reminiscences . . . Nobody ever played so high a political game as I did." There was nothing else to do but to await the verdict of posterity.

Winston's biography, "often beautifully and always interestingly written," introduced a new political generation to Lord Randolph and, at the same time, reminded parliamentary veterans (especially Balfour) of an ideology whom they would have been hard pressed to recollect. *The Times Literary Supplement*, slowing for filial bias, praised its general objectivity: " . . . no-one who cares for politics will willingly put it down when it is once in his hands. People better not care for politics had better not touch it." Much the same thing can be said about this new "political life," but with a demurrer. The professional standards of biography (if not for politics) have since become more rigorous, and Foster meets them with a pungent style and shrewd insights. Consequently, people who care for politics will be absolutely fascinated, and those who do not care will better comprehend the reasons why.



This caricature of the actress Berta Singerman, drawn in 1929 by the Brazilian artist J. Carlos, is one of the illustrations in *Edward Lucie-Smith's example-filled study The Art of Caricature* (128pp. Orbis. £8.95; paperback, £5.95. 0 85613 393). *Modernism is a subject well suited to the visual wit of the caricaturist. Oskar Reisch's famous cartoon on Cubism, which is also included in the book, shows a well-rounded couple looking at a Cubist painting of a naked lady and a Cubist couple of angular physique appreciating the curving contours of a conventionally drawn nude. Carlos's drawing with its economical, deft lines celebrates even as it takes off the work of the Cubists. The Art of Caricature is a historical rather than a theoretical study. It traces the development of caricature from the grotesqueries of the Ancient World to its many different modern forms, from Egyptian statues and Greek amphora decorations to the Dadaists and strip-cartoonists. Nearly two hundred pictures represent extremes as well as classic masters of the moral-drawing art such as Pieter Brueghel the Elder, Gillray, Daumier, Teuniel, and Thurber.*

Tojo's tolerance

By Ian Nish

BEN-AMI SHILLONY:

Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan
238pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £15.
0 19 821573 8

In *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan* Ben-Ami Shillony of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has provided us with another fine example of historical scholarship, as succinct and rigorously researched as his earlier study, *Revolt in Japan*, which dealt with the Young Officers' Insurrection of 1936. By politics, he means the nature of Japanese government during the war, the rivalries that arose, and its efforts to cope with the military reverses that it faced as the war continued. In the second half of the book he deals with "culture", by which he means the role of the press and the intellectuals during the war. Newspapers like *Asahi* and *Asahi*, though they were subject to stringent press controls and state propaganda, were still able from time to time to voice their criticisms. For their part, the intellectuals, who tended to discard as decadent the Western culture to which they had previously been attracted and to search for "Eastern values" to replace it, in general had scant regard for the military leadership of the day, but nonetheless supported the nation's war effort.

The extent of the opposition to government policy is surprising, and the fact that it was tolerated to a degree in a country which is often spoken of as being "totalitarian" seems to confirm Shillony's view that that is not an appropriate epithet to apply to wartime Japan.

Yet there is a question of perspective. Having admitted that there was remarkable tolerance of hostile views and anti-government activities, and that the wartime government was less repressive than the corresponding German and Italian regimes, it is

still difficult to accept the proposition put forward by Hills Lory that the Japanese Prime Minister, General Tojo, "has great power but his authority in the Japanese government does not equal Roosevelt's in the United States nor Churchill's in England". Doubtless there were elements in the bureaucracy and the elite restraining General Tojo. But they were less influential than, for instance, the criticisms of the press and the questioning by hostile politicians in Congress or Parliament which the Western leaders had to face. And Tojo had many more instruments of repression to hand. Shillony himself writes that, during the great bombing raids on Japanese cities towards the end of the war, ordinary criminals were let out of their cells to find shelter, while "political prisoners" were kept locked in and many perished in their cells.

Another theme of *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan* is the rise and fall of General Tojo, who served as prime minister from 1941 to 1944. Tojo saw his role as that of coordinator between mutually jealous fighting services and as a link between them and government. In order to improve coordination, he took on the Ministry of Munitions in addition to his task as War Minister. But his ability to maintain a consensus diminished as the fortunes of war turned against Japan. The *Jishin* (senior statesman) grew disenchanted with Tojo's performance and planted seeds of doubt in court circles. When Tojo added the job of Army Chief of Staff to his other portfolios in February 1944, a many-sided revolt occurred which forced him to resign in July. Shillony comments: "Had he been a dictator, he would have used force against his opponents or would have accused them of treason." Instead he accepted his fate as previous prime ministers had done. Shillony regards this as evidence that the war was conducted in Japan within the framework of institutions and practices, official and unofficial, left over from pre-war days. By and large, the peace was concluded in the same way.

KATHLEEN M. LEA and T. M. GANG (Editors)

Godfrey of Bulloigne
A Critical Edition of Edward Fairfax's translation of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, together with Fairfax's Original Poems
707pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £35.
0 19 812480 5

"Dante was a bitter man who had seen hell; Tasso was a gentleman who had read about Jerusalem." Tasso must have read about Jerusalem to some purpose, for Chateaubriand, standing within sight of the city, was impressed by the verisimilitude of his description. But Ford Madox Ford's throwaway sentence explodes like a bomb on *Gerusalemme Liberata*. In an age which admires Dante - often without reading him - the implied criticism may seem to have destroyed Tasso entirely. Not that people pay all that much attention to the critical pronouncements of Ford Madox Ford - less than they should, I would say; but this sentence is deadly because, neatly put, it at once confirms the prejudices of education of anyone brought up in the past fifty years or so, and contains a terrible truth which cannot be denied. It belongs to the same succession of judgments as Eliot's putting down of Charles Whibley with the quip "a critic would not use so careless a phrase as 'Tasso's masterpiece'". In fact, a critic might well speak of "Tasso's masterpiece", in the right context. It would undoubtedly be wrong to mention the work in the same breath as the *Divine Comedy*, but it is wrong to let a relative judgment take on the character of an absolute. The seventeenth century was not much given to reading Dante, which should be a warning of the ups and downs of even the greatest reputations. And for the seventeenth century, Tasso was important.

There must be a lot of people, with a fair acquaintance with the English literature of the seventeenth century, who have never actually read Fairfax's Tasso, though all of them will know the translator's name and will have dipped into the work or read extracts from it. This sort of nodding acquaintance does not take one very far, with a work of this kind. There were five or six editions in the nineteenth century, none of them often to be picked up now in second-hand shops; there was an edi-

tion by the Centaur Press in 1962, thought to be rather highly priced at £4.50. That leaves plenty of room for this new edition. One must add that, well-groomed and "critical" though it is, it can hardly be said to be cheap at £35; one may hope that it will prepare the way for a more popular edition in the course of a few years.

Godfrey of Bulloigne first appeared in 1600; Edward Fairfax, an illegitimate son of the Yorkshire family to which Marvell's Fairfax belonged, was born about 1588, so the translation is the work of a young man. Edward seems to have been living with his old father, in Yorkshire, during the years when the work was done, looking after family affairs in a manner which - true to form in such cases - made for trouble when the legitimate son and heir came home. Some particulars of this squabble are given in the biographical part of the introduction to this volume. Of more interest to the reader is the fact that the translator was a man settled in an old-fashioned gentleman's establishment, far from the capital, Edward apparently having returned there from Clare Hall, Cambridge. The book he was to translate was not particularly old-fashioned - the latest thing from Italy in 1584 (completed there in 1575) and already spoken of by Spenser in 1589 at the same time as Homer, Virgil and Ariosto - another case of uncritical talk. Eliot might have said.

Edward Fairfax himself might well have lumped all these authors of epic together, following Spenser, and he might have compounded the confusion by adding Spenser himself to the list; and Dryden can still mention Tasso with Homer and Virgil. It was the perspective of the age. The seventeenth century had a notion of heroic poetry, and of narrative poetry merely, which has ceased to have operational force in our day. The "long poem" for us - with Pound and MacDiarmid - is a rag-bag, and the sort of continuous writing in verse which was a central notion, and a not uncommon practice, in former times is now probably a merely academic conception for most people. While one would not wish to provoke - God forbid - a spate of long narrative poems, it can be said that anyone whose reading has not included a number of such productions from past ages will have a very defective idea of the uses of verse. In the infancy of the novel people turned to the story in verse for a

True valour and nobility

By C. H. Sisson

good read rather than for any of the more high-falutin reasons given by critics. This was certainly the case when Fairfax was writing, and the need was satisfied, in varying degrees by Daniel and Drayton as well as by Spenser. The habit of writing histories and fictions in verse may be regarded as the flag-end of medieval and older traditions - of Chaucer to the Chansons de Geste and beyond.

The habit had its own Renaissance colouring. To the charm of the narrative was added - and nowhere more than in Spenser and Tasso - the charm of a curiously transmitted sentiment of chivalry, something which has only to be named to be found repugnant by most readers of the late twentieth century. Yet it is a very elementary error, for anyone to whom the pleasures of literature are accessible, to dismiss the work of another age because of the prejudices of any kind soon show up the fashions of any kind they always were, but what has appealed deeply to the minds of earlier generations will always be found, on closer acquaintance, to have meaning for our own; such discoveries are of the essence of humane studies or, more simply, of reading for pleasure in any extended way. There must be people who have been put off reading *The Faerie Queene* by notions of the sort of thing it is. Yet anyone who starts to read it without being too much bullied by our contemporary inhibitions will find himself drawn on by the clarity and elegance of a language very little obfuscated by its few quaintnesses, into a world certainly not less grown-up than our own.

Tasso must mean less to an English reader than Spenser, but in the translation of Fairfax *Gerusalemme Liberata* has been made so much at home here that it is, at the least, a piece of reading which anyone who cares for the core of our literature will find illuminating as well as pleasurable. As to the supposedly inaccessible scintilla, W. P. Ker, a voice from the early part of this century which admittedly may sound to some as remote as Tasso's, said: "It is difficult to explain, but it is easy to recognise in the gravity and melancholy grace of Tasso something closely akin to the English conceptions of true valour and nobility in the first half of the seventeenth century." True valour and nobility may not seem to modern readers a small and elusive part of those times or of any other, but it is a perfectly

genuine element in them none the less. Ker goes on to say: "The religion of Tasso, in spite of all differences, was found acceptable by English readers; it is easier to understand than Milton's." That points to something far more complex than a mere antithesis between Reformation and Counter-Reformation.

The qualitative difference between Tasso and Dante can hardly be better illustrated than by putting side by side the Ulysses of Canto XXVI of the *Inferno* and the miraculous voyage in the fifteenth canto of the *Gerusalemme*. It would be folly to expect the combination of intellectual and imaginative force of Dante, or his laconic expression, to be equalled. Who does equal them?

Fifty lines of Canto XXVI gives us the story, as against five hundred in Tasso, and with Dante we are so close to the roots of the human mind that the impression is not of legend but of reality. Yet Tasso's tale is far from negligible, and tells far more in a short space than most of the literature admired in our own time. Two Christian knights go in search of the hero Rinaldo. None of the ordinary difficulties of navigation are encountered, for their craft is the superior slowness of a more mature language, which did not tempt him as he might otherwise have been tempted to over-long sentences. He must have been helped, too, by the comparative forthrightness of Tasso's narrative. Spenser no doubt owes more to Boiardo and Ariosto, and if Tasso is still episodic, he is much less so than Spenser - much less so than Virgil, Lancelotti thought. Indeed Lancelotti, who is to be taken seriously in such matters, considered the *Gerusalemme Liberata* . . . of all such

But yet the greedy Ocean was his grave . . .

Neither in Fairfax nor in his original is the terror, or the intelligence, of Dante's account approached. The Renaissance inhabits a more hopeful world, and after the recollections of Ulysses comes a prophecy of Columbus, not difficult for the poet of the sixteenth century. It is not Dante's "mondo senza gente" that the party find as they run "twixt South and West", but the Canaries, mythologized, where Rinaldo lies enslaved in the most delightful way disapproved of by moralists. The sea closes over Dante's Ulysses, but the Crusaders return with the liberated hero in continue the battle for Jerusalem.

Fairfax never has Spenser entirely out of his mind as he renders Tasso's description of the Fortunate Isles and their delightful pitfalls. Indeed but of reality. Yet Tasso's tale is far from negligible, and tells far more in a short space than most of the literature admired in our own time. Two Christian knights go in search of the hero Rinaldo. None of the ordinary difficulties of navigation are encountered, for their craft is the superior slowness of a more mature language, which did not tempt him as he might otherwise have been tempted to over-long sentences. He must have been helped, too, by the comparative forthrightness of Tasso's narrative. Spenser no doubt owes more to Boiardo and Ariosto, and if Tasso is still episodic, he is much less so than Spenser - much less so than Virgil, Lancelotti thought. Indeed Lancelotti, who is to be taken seriously in such matters, considered the *Gerusalemme Liberata* . . . of all such

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compositions, the most perfect in plan". Admittedly, perfection of plan has its limitations, in a long poem of any kind, but there is in Tasso a sense of movement and direction towards the end which must have been helpful to the translator. Moreover, Fairfax seems, on such evidence as we have, to have been an unpretentious man, and if like all translators he sometimes departs a little from his original, it is rarely in order to present the reader with something he thinks will be more impressive. While Spenserians such as Giles and Phineas Fletcher were going a way which lost itself in the sand, Fairfax hit one of the trails the language of his time was taking, towards a certain thinness, no doubt, but also towards a certain elegance, so that one can understand how it was that as Dryden reports, "our famous Walter" owned that "the deriv'd harmony of his numbers from *Godfrey of Bullion*, which was turned into English by Mr Fairfax".

There is plenty of neatness in Fairfax, of a kind which increased in English until it was overdone: "Thus women know, and thus they use the guile, / T'endure the valiant, and beguile the wise."

But there is no great air of contrivance about most of the verses. "One would expect an epic to maintain a lofty level of style throughout," say the present editors, "apparently without repugnance. Tasso maintains such a level. Fairfax does not." The contemporary English reader is unlikely to complain. The translation holds our interest; and this is the first requisite in a long poem. It would be wrong to suggest that Fairfax has any exceptional powers of invention, but he gets the sense of the Italian into lively and convincing English:

To all death she could her beauty frame,
False, faire and yong, a virgin and a witch

stands for Tasso's
gli accorgimenti e le più occulte frodi
di una femina o maga o lei sua note.

Fairfax can manage his stanza admirably and present a traditional topic with freshness and effect:

So, in the passing of a day, doth pass
The bud and blossom of the life of man,
Nor ere doth flourish more, but like the grass
Cut down, becometh withered, pale and wan.

Matters of conscience

By Daniel Karlin

CAMILLE WELLS SLIGHTS

The Casuistical Tradition in Shakespeare, Donoo, Herbert, and Milton

307pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £13.10.
0 691 06463 6

This is a good book of its kind: informed about something worth knowing, judicious in imparting it. Camille Wells Slight's book describes the formal characteristics of English Protestant casuistry in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and then argues that this (unhappily termed) "casuistical paradigm" helps to interpret some features of the literature of the period. She makes no grandiose claims, and carries her considerable scholarship lightly.

Casuistry deals with "cases of conscience", not with the overmastering question "What must I do to be saved?" but with a host of smaller questions: whether one might take an oath of loyalty to an unlawful ruler, whether one might marry a recusant, whether one might commit a lesser sin to prevent a greater, and so on. Its popularity in England (Slight's convincingly shows, the differences between the native brand and the casuistry of the Counter-Reformation) coincides, not surprisingly, with the revolutionary in religious, social and political institutions from the reign of Elizabeth I to that of Charles II. Casuistry, in other words, supplemented the moral teaching of the church with the moral teaching of the state.

gather then the rose while time thins
Shout is the day, done when it scant
begin,
Gather the rose of love, while yet thou
lovest, the bird, embracing, be
embrace.

The English language at the turn of the sixteenth/seventeenth centuries was in a happy condition, and Fairfax had the gift of it. The editors, besides presenting us with a carefully prepared text of *Godfrey*, have usefully included what remains of Fairfax's original poems: if there is not legal force, there is charm in his "Epitaph upon King James" (presumably written more than a quarter of a century after the translation):

All that have eyes now wake and weep;
I those waking was our sleep.
Is fallen asleep himself, and never
Shall wake more till he wake ever.
Death's iron hand has closed those eyes
That were at once three kingdoms' spies.

Tasso's matter was entirely suitable to be made at home in Jacobean and Caroline England, and Fairfax did make it at home, which is surely the most a translator can be expected to do. The theme is an echo of older European concerns, distanced already in the Italian. For what was the First Crusade then in Ferrara? A distant recollection recalled by the battle of Lepanto (1571), or the anxieties raised by the fall of Constantinople (1453)? There is no realism in Tasso, as regards the nature of the enemy, and little in relation to other outward matters, for this is a world of sorcerers, maiden warriors, and other colourful paraphernalia. But the inward seriousness of the poem is not in doubt. If we treat with reserve the detail of the alleged allegory, there is still no question but that the work as a whole gives us the elements at war in the poet's grave and highly cultivated mind. The cause matters; beyond the taking of Jerusalem, a Christian salvation. Tancréd says:

But hear me in this joyful town, I pray,
Die, there may I see my latest day,
The place where Christ upon his cross was rent.

That if cut short by humane accident
I die, there may I see my latest day,
The place where Christ upon his cross was rent.

(for Tasso's "loco ove morì l'Uomo immortale"). In Fairfax's rendering we have the very stuff of seventeenth-century religious apprehension, from Donne to Bunyan.

The enemy, for the Counter-

Reformation, was rather Protestants than Saracens, as for the English Puritans it was Prelates and the Great Whore of Babylon, and it is this unprepossessing struggle which is caught up in Tasso's epic, for if he had "read about Jerusalem", he had seen the Counter-Reformation at closer quarters. How little any poet – or perhaps anyone else – gets beyond his time! There is no doubt the First Crusade which inspired the first Crusade in *La Chanson de Roland* than there is in the *Genesim Liberata*, of which it is the nominal subject. *Roland* was probably composed about the time of Godfrey's capture of Jerusalem, and it falsifies its own nominal subject, the Pyrenean campaign of Charlemagne, to a tale of imperial Christian armies wiping the floor with the Saracens. There is no end to the sleight-of-hand of poets, or to human misunderstanding.

What's Who in Shakespeare's England by Alan and Veronica Palmer has recently been published (280pp. Brighton: Harvester Press. £30.00 85527 718 1). From the years 1590-1623 the authors have selected more than 700 men and women whose influence on national and local level offers insights into Shakespeare's plays and the background against which they were written, including not only actors, writers of poems and other public figures of the age, but also Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwickshire notables. The biographies are preceded by a classified list of entries in which the subjects are divided according to occupation and the volume also contains a number of black-and-white illustrations of its subjects.

Pithy and playful

By James Kirkup

SŌIKU SHIGEMATSU

A Zen Forest: Sayings of the Masters Foreword by Gary Snyder
175pp. New York/Tokyo: Weatherhead. \$15.95.
0 8348 0159 0

"A word is a finger that points at the moon," writes the Zen priest Sōiku Shigematsu in his eloquent introduction to this unusual and entertaining book. He tells us that Zen students should aim for the moon, not for the finger pointing at it, which is merely an accessory to enlightenment. In Japan the gesture of pointing with the forefinger of the right hand is so much more intense and vital than in the West, because in Japan one learns to point at something by holding the hand vertically, not (as in the West) horizontally; this extends the pointing finger and the pointing gesture in one fluid line along the top of the hand, along the outstretched arm into the shoulder and down into the entire body, so that it is not just a trivial forefinger but the entire being that is pointing. When a Japanese points at something, he is not just indicating an object, but identifying his whole being with it.

Sōiku Shigematsu is a Zen priest at Shōgenji Temple at Shimizu in Shizuoka Prefecture, and also a Professor of English at Shizuoka University. He is firmly in the tradition of intellectual yet mindless Zen priests. His maddening yet clarifying book is a translation of quintessential sayings of Zen masters, used to provoke illumination in monks, students and monks. The sayings are often de-routing, absurd (apparently), hermetic or simply astonishingly poetic in a surreal way. These pithy one-liners have been handed down over the centuries by Chinese and Japanese Zen masters, and are an exquisite distillation of the most unpedantic wisdom ever known, an absolutely unavoidable sown from the foundations of Zen Buddhist philosophy known as "koans". The most famous of these, in our solemn Western world, is the very simple one for beginners: "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" (here expressed simply and most effectively as a statement, not a question: "One-handed clapping"). In this properly upsetting book, we find over 1,200 of these, densely con-



Francis Picabia
During his lifetime the Paris-born painter Francis Picabia (1879-1953) was associated with many of the more significant movements in twentieth-century art, including Cubism, Dadaism and Surrealism. The naturalistic Le Matador (above) was painted c. 1941 at Gofe-Juan in the south of France, and will come up for sale at Christie's auction of Impressionist and Modern Paintings, Drawings and Sculptures to be held on Tuesday, December 1, 1981 at 8 King Street, St James's, London SW1.

tracted (sometimes almost to the point of invisibility), comic, profound and playfully mystifying sayings.

Anything less like Christian psalms and apophthegms would be hard to imagine. The Zen Buddhists show their respect for divinity and saints by treating them often with boisterous, irreverent (and, indeed, somewhat blasphemous) familiarity, in the manner of the medieval mystery plays. Here is a fairly mild example:

Chop
Valoreen's head off!
Ignore
Buddha-and-Patriarchal

A notorious preoccupation of the medieval schoolmen is expressed thus:

Turn
a somersault
on a needle point.

Indeed, the somersault is a symbol of enlightenment, as in:

A void sky turns
a somersault.

And there are astonishing re-evaluations of the obvious:

The water a cow laps
turns into milk;
the water a snake licks
changes into poison.

This seems to be the equivalent of St Matthew's miraculous insight: "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

Zen can be the best kind of therapy:

Careless
worry
of my mind:
One evening's talk
unburdens it.

As in all Japanese short poems, the seasons play a regulating role to the quest for *satori*:

Falling snow bridges
the sides of the gorge;
mist hides and discloses
the mountain lion.

And the Zenogy returns again, lo:

Hill Hill Hill
— with a lump of snow.

This reminds me of seeing schoolboys of Matsushita pelting a Buddhist with snowballs – their own way of worshipping him, and one he was pleased to accept.

Another saying instructs us:

The ordinary and the sacred
live together.

And:

Once you preach,
the pole

is gone –
a motto some of our ministers of religion and self-appointed moralists would do well to remember.

In an illuminating foreword, the American poet Gary Snyder, who knows Japan and Zen so well, makes some pertinent comparisons between these sayings and their equivalents in the culture of the Mohave Indians, as well as in Bantu riddles, and some remarkable Alaskan Yukon, Samoan, Hawaiian and good old homely Kentuckian exhortations. I particularly like his example from the Philippines:

The house owner was caught:
the house escaped
through the window.

(answer: a fish net)

I, too, am reminded of koans in other cultures: the Tyne-side koan of my childhood that goes, "You're a nice lad, Jimmy, but yer muck stinks." Cocteau's "Nothing reflects less than a mirror" can be found mirrored in this volume's

The two mirrors
reflect each other.

Shigematsu's book has been sensitively translated with the help of Claran Murray, and is adorned by the vigorous calligraphies of Priest Shigematsu's abbot, Kūjo Shigematsu, who is also his father and teacher. A Zen follower, Gyokusen, has contributed her own lively interpretations of the Ten Oxherding Pictures, which I first encountered nearly twenty years ago in Daisetz Suzuki's *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, and the originals of which (the Kaku-an versions) are in Shokokuji Temple, Kyoto.

Like all Weatherhill publications, this book is beautifully printed and produced: just to take it up in one's hands is enough to persuade one that illumination is very near. There is a very useful appendix listing all the sayings in alphabetical order in both Japanese and romanized form. There is a map of China and a helpful accompanying glossary with a bibliographical note of previous editions, anthologies and translations. For all lovers of Zen, and of peculiar Japanese wit and Chinese puzzles, this will always be an essential work. It should be placed in the hands of every blabber and archbishop in the Christian church, for they will find in it much to support ecumenical advances:

The sacred tortoise
climbs over the land;
How can it escape
— a trail to the dirt?

A highly popular murder

By Philip Collins

ALBERT BOROWITZ

The Woman who Murdered Black Sam
The Bermondsey Horror

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What Dickens best liked to talk about, said his colleague George Augustus Sala, "was the latest new piece at the theatre, the latest exciting trial or police case, the latest social craze or social swindle, and especially the latest murder and the newest thing in ghosts". So we might have guessed that when Tennyson sat up into the small hours with the Master of Bullioli, Benjamin Jowett, it was to swap yarns about murder. "He seems rather to revel in such descriptions – one would not guess it from his poetry," observed "Lewis Carroll" after another Tennysonian disquisition on the subject. Nor perhaps would one guess from Henry James's novels that he was another devotee of "the dear old human and social murders" in which we are so agreeably at home, as he put it to a fellow-addict.

Many Victorians, of all classes, revelled in murder, with less pretence about their ghoulishness than later generations have affected. *The Times* and the *Annual Register* gave generous space to the topic, which was, more predictably, the great stand-by of street broadsheets and low Sunday newspapers. Recall, from *Great Expectations*, Mr Wopsle reading the newspaper to the patrons of the Three Jolly Bargemans:

A highly popular murder has been committed, and Mr Wopsle was inured in blood to the eyebrows. He gloated over every abhorrent adjective in the description, . . . he faintly moaned "I am done for," as the victim, and he barbarously bellowed, "I'll serve you out," as the murderer . . . He enjoyed himself thoroughly, and we all enjoyed ourselves.

"I do not like accidents, there is no meaning in them," remarks a mild lady in another novel of the 1860s:

"but," she added confidentially, "I dearly like a murder. Of course I do not wish for murders," she continued, in a tone of resigned virtue; "but when there is one, why, I like it. It is human nature."

If not human nature, it certainly seems to come naturally to the British in the newspaper age. Robin Robb, noting overnight books on the Yorkshire Ripper in the *TLS* recently, remarked that "Many people eagerly enjoy the killing of their fellow-beings" through "social propriety demands" – now if not in the previous century – "a veil of pretence". The victim, he suggested, must be "different" in some way – foreign or black or gay or female or "no better than they should be". Patrick O'Connor, the victim in the "highly popular murder" in Bermondsey in 1849 which is the subject of Albert Borowitz's book, was Irish but otherwise failed to meet Mr Robb's specifications.

It wasn't a stylish murder, either, nor was the new Detective Department at Scotland Yard, established seven years earlier, severely tested in solving the case. When a man is missing and his corpse is soon found, covered in quicklime, beneath the kitchen floor in the house of some close acquaintances, who have hurriedly disappeared leaving a richly strewn trail of clues behind them, the finger of suspicion can be pointed with some confidence. Frederick and Marie Manning, the accused couple, had recently purchased quicklime, a shovel, a crowbar and a pair of pliers, and had arranged for most of the items to be delivered to the house; in addition, they had been selling or offering for sale securities taken from the dead man's belongings. The murder was as inefficient as it was brutal: low Bermondsey stuff. The reason why, as

Jane Welsh Carlyle reported in the *Times*, "the General Public has talked of little else" was that the murderers – quickly apprehended, charged and hanged – put up a splendid performance. And it was a good plot, in the fictional rather than the forensic sense, with a pleasantly topical aspect, too. One motive for the crime, perhaps the only substantial motive – though an agreeable if indistinct whiff of adultery, jealousy and revenge also hung over the episode – was that O'Connor was a man of considerable though declining assets.

In 1849, the railway-mania of the past decade was being badly jolted. As a *Times* leading article on the Bermondsey case remarked: "That no happy characteristic or timely adornment might be wanting to the deed, the scrip and shares of familiar railway lines are mixed with the transaction . . . Mrs Manning made haste to slay her man, and realise, since the market was falling". Certainly Mrs Manning's lodger had been bundled out of the house very hurriedly, shortly before her kitchen became the last resting-place of another plying guest. The extruded lodger was a medical student, doubtless getting used to laymen's curiosity about medical matters; but in the circumstances now revealed there did seem something sinister about his landlord's inquiry. "Which part of the skull is most dangerous to injure?" The lodger also found good reason to remember some emphatic advice from Mrs Manning's husband: "For God's sake never marry a foreigner. She will be the ruin of you."

Patrick O'Connor, an unpleasant and dishonest man, was no saintly Duncan, but the Mannings reminded everybody of the Macbeths. She seemed much the more resolute and capable of the two; as her defending counsel, Sergeant Ballantyne, reminded, "Although she was my client, I suspect she was the power that really originated the deed of blood". Moreover, O'Connor, like Duncan, was a guest. He had been invited to dinner, and was persuaded to go downstairs into the fatal kitchen, where his grave already awaited him, to wash his hands, because (he told) "a very particular young lady" was also coming to dinner. *The Times* elaborated on the Macbeth analogy in its leading article on the Mannings' execution – this little slice of life neatly proved "how truly Shakespeare could describe, and how little he exaggerated" – though Shakespeare's were "not the only pages illustrated from the native horrors of a little street in the lowest of our suburbs. It is Ahab and Jeezebel to the life: Jeezebel the daring foreigner, the profane unbeliever, as Maria Manning now seems to have been."

Part of Ballantyne's defence of Maria Manning was that she had been O'Connor's mistress, and that it was her husband, belatedly over-come by "a paroxysm of jealousy", who had planned and carried out the murder. The fact that she was Swiss by birth added spice to the story and provided perfect verification of the widespread suspicion that Continental women were sadly different from their English counterparts. As a reviewer of *Black House* (serialized four years later) commented: "Few readers formed any other conclusion than that Mr Dickens was working up to the trial of Horstmann (so like Maria Manning in many particulars), who had planned and carried out the murder. The fact that she was Swiss by birth added spice to the story and provided perfect verification of the widespread suspicion that Continental women were sadly different from their English counterparts. 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noble and "fully expressed" figure and about the sanitary engineering underneath that beautiful dress, suggests that Manning may not have been alone in his momentary gratification. Many "high and influential" personages, moreover, felt no need to pay their last respects to her interesting cadaver, it was reported, but were turned away by the Governor of the Forcemenor Lane Gaul, who nevertheless gratified those local magistrates, prudently remembering, perhaps, on which county boundary's side his future bread might be buttered. At least one official, however, had not enjoyed the day: the hangman, Calcraft, had never wanted to hang a husband and wife together and, in the event, "did not much like it".

Just before this final farewell performance Maria had been reconciled with her husband. After the murder, and the selling-up of their furniture, they had fled in opposite directions, she taking most of the loot to Edinburgh and he sailing to the Channel Islands to drown his well-justified apprehensions in brandy. Both had inefficiently taken care, and the cabalists were able to point the police in the right direction: was thrilled when their descriptions were wired on the new electric telegraph to points north and south, and leader-writers were ecstatic about the efficiency of this new scientific dimension in the war against crime. After their capture the Mannings provided further excellent entertainment by trying to get each other hanged, though Maria made a feeble attempt to invent a young man from Guernsey who, she claimed, had acted in concert with Manning in carrying out the murder. Manning, more communicative than his wife, gave the authorities various lengthy accounts of O'Connor's death, in which Maria was to blame (a line of defence stigmatized at the time as being very unmanly). In his condemned-cell confession, however, he admitted to having given the coup de grâce: "he moaned, and I never liked him very well, and I battered

in his skull with a ripping chisel". This memorably laconic statement was much the best of Manning's lines in the drama. Maria maintained her standard while awaiting death. "Damn seize you all" was her favourite form of address to her gaolers. "Base and shameful English!" she had exclaimed on being found guilty, throwing the court rug at the lawyers. "Then she is no lady" was her comment on the Queen's refusing to grant a reprieve.

Mr Borowitz's is the first full-length study of this enduringly popular murder - the Mannings held their place in the Chamber of Horrors until 1971, and may still be seen in the Tussauds storehouse at Wootton Bassett - and he tells his tale well. He ends with the curious irony that, had Maria been Manning's mistress rather than O'Connor's, she might well have escaped the gallows. Her lawyers tried to obtain a separate trial for her under an ancient law allowing foreign defendants to demand a jury half of whom spoke their language, but, unluckily for her, a law had been passed the previous year conferring British citizenship on any foreign-born woman married to a British citizen. Borowitz sees Manning as the guillotine party, and argues that, on the evidence that would have been available at a separate trial, Maria would not have been convicted.

He offers a good account, too, of the controversy caused by Dickens's two famous letters to *The Times* arguing for private executions: the huge crowd had behaved in a degradingly ribald and profligate manner. (A minor controversy also ran on the *Times* correspondence page about the etiquette for more genteel members of execution audiences: was it right and decent to use opera-glasses, or was that going too far?) One touch missing from his narrative is the awareness shown by Richard Altick in his *Victorian Studies in Scarlet* (an admirable book about murder-magazines in which I owe some of my quotations above) that

the minuteness of the recorded evidence at trials for murder provides a unique source for social historians about the triteness of daily life - for instance, in this case, that O'Connor kept the key of his tea-caddy on his key-ring.

Dickens's four letters to the *Daily News* about capital punishment should be five (see *TLS*, August 12, 1965). Otherwise I noted no error - except the title, *The Woman who Murdered Black Sam*. Most sources, including the *DNB* entry on Maria, report that her choice of black satin for her final appearance made the material unfashionable for many years thereafter. Borowitz argues convincingly, however, on the evidence of fashion reports and haberdashers' advertisements, that this is untrue. It seems a pity, then, that he should have retained an eye-catching title at the expense of accuracy. Maria, however, inevitably inspired such myths.

Another, unmentioned by Mr Borowitz, is the editor of *Punch*'s telling his Table colleagues, in the 1860s, how Charles Field the detective "with his flabby hand and cool tongue" had "traced Mrs Manning to a lodging, and tapped at door 'Only me - Charley Field - so just open the door quickly, Minnie'". As Inspector Field was recognizably Dickens's Inspector Bucket, who arrests Hor-tense, this would indeed have been an intriguing additional link between *Black House* and the Manning case. But, though Field was involved in the investigations, Maria was in fact arrested by an Edinburgh policeman. With her high sense of the appropriate, she would doubtless much have preferred it to have been the more illustrious man from Scotland Yard.

In *Rule Britannia* (246pp, Routledge and Kegan Paul, £8.95 0 7100 0774) Peter Padmore offers a "sample in depth" of the Victorian and Edwardian novel, at a time when, according to a French strategist, the sea, for England, was "a territory, a British territory of course".

None of the contributors to this volume display his qualities, but it would be an unfair and unfair requirement that in the circumstances they should. Their function is to stand up and be counted, each holding a tribute of pure research, as at a harvest festival. And scholars from across the world have gathered for the occasion; America is well represented, as is Oxford, of course; Fernand Braudel has sent something from Paris, and I even notice two contributions from Cambridge (though one is from a new arrival there).

Richard Cobb, in an essay on "Thermidor or the Retreat from Fantasy", no doubt intended to be scintillating, comes nearest to the exploration of broad, general themes in an unbuttoned, gossamer-roparian way, and his style, though much overblown, does give the suggestion of a rather undisciplined distinction. Michael Howard, Trevor-Roper's successor in the Regius chair at Oxford, offers an elegant and perceptive study of "Empire, Race and War in pre-1914 Britain". Kevin Sharpe is useful on "Archbishop Laud and the University of Oxford", an essay which has deeper implications than its title would suggest. Other contributions, as is not unusual, seem to be chips hacked from a larger sculpture, and some seem hampered by the need to cram twenty-four essays into one not very large volume; for instance, I would have

The shock of cold water

By J. P. Kenyon

HUGH LLOYD-JONES, VALERIE PEARL and BLAIR WORDEN (Editors)
History and Imagination
Essays in honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper
396pp, Duckworth, £25.
0 7136 1570 X

This is a Festschrift of consistently high quality, as befits its recipient, who is one of our most distinguished living historians. Hugh Trevor-Roper's output, in terms of erudite bulk, has never been large - and it is a source of regret to his admirers that it shows no signs of becoming much larger - but it has been of a quite unusual quality, and it has covered an unusual range: all the way from Hitler's Berlin to Justinian's Constantinople. His scholarship in his preferred fields - the seventeenth century and the mid-twentieth - is immaculate and at times intimidating, and if in other areas it is best described as "brezy", as in his rum-bustious Border raids into Scotland, one of his main contributions to historical thinking lies in his capacity to illuminate a period not his own by dropping down into it new shafts of imaginative insight. His metaphorical description of the best kind of research is significant: "The water must be fresh, cold and stimulating; it must flow from outside sources, and its impact must be perceptible, causing sudden shock, gradual adjustment, and the pleasant gurgle of controversy."

It may be that at times he has been mischievous for mischief's sake, and he is certainly one of the most youthful of our modern Nestors, but even in his trivialities he is sustained by one of the best prose styles of any historian writing today. As Hugh Lloyd-Jones says in his preface, he "writes not in sentences but in periods" and "few living authors have a more felicitous ear for the rhythms of the language". Not surprisingly, he is one of the most aggressive defenders of the Book of Common Prayer against the inanities of the new Alternative Service Book. It is good news that he has now embarked on a second academic career, at Cambridge, just as his first, at Oxford, was drawing to a close. It is a shame that modern contracts of employment will not allow him to emulate the feats of Sir Adolphus William Ward, another modern historian, who retired as Principal of Owens College, Manchester, in 1897, only to be elected Master of Peterhouse in 1900 and to die in office in 1924.

For instance, an expensive and now scarce Festschrift for Theodore Besterman conceals some of his most original thoughts on Olbbon; his less original thoughts on this subject, though still valuable, form the introduction to an American "Portable Gibbon". That recondite and forbidding periodical *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* has two sparkling essays from him on aspects of the Enlightenment; one of which, on "The Scottish Enlightenment", produced something of a furor when he had the temerity to deliver it as a lecture at St Andrews, another lecture was published in pamphlet form in 1975, though some of it survived in an introduction to a selection from Clarendon's *History*, which now seems to have been re-moderated. So far as I know he has never reprinted an essay on "The Baroque Century", which served as the introduction to a cooperative volume on *The Age of Expansion* in 1968. Lamentably, there are probably others which have escaped my notice. Lamentably, because even in his slightest work he displays those powers of imagination which are a stimulus to other historians. To quote his own words again, by way of envoi: "In the end, it is the imagination of the historian, not his scholarship or his methods (necessary though these are), which will discern the hidden forces of change."

Not have many contributors headed the master's own exhortations. In his inaugural lecture at Oxford in 1957, which prefaces this volume, Trevor-Roper said, "History that is not useful, that has not some lay appeal, is mere antiquarianism; history that is not controversial is dead history." It would be asking too much, perhaps, for a volume of this nature to have wide popular appeal, and its utility is mainly for the profession, but it is not unfair to say that it is curiously bland. In the background sometimes - as in Geoffrey Elton's "Arthur Hill, Lord Burghley and the Antiquity of Parliament" - a keen ear can detect the pleasant gurgle of controversy, but there are no "sudden shocks". Moreover, only two contributors have followed up his suggestion, in the valedictory lecture which forms an epilogue to the volume, of the comparative value of imaginary alternative histories. Braudel discusses why the Reformation was not fully accepted in France, and by implication explores what might have happened if it had been. Similarly, in "The Year of the Three Ambassadors", John Elliott considers the consequences for the Long Parliament if Charles I had been in a position to respond to Spain's overtures in 1640.

But in any case it was a mistake to include two of Trevor-Roper's own lectures. Neither of them has the air of being particularly well digested, and the occasions on which they were delivered did not call for profundity, yet in range of thought and distinction of style they are streets ahead of most of the essays sandwiched between them; indeed, of some they seem to make a gentle mockery. I would rather have seen them embodied in a new collection of his own. It is fourteen years since he published the last such collection, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change*, and those who seek the best of his work since then must grub around in the less frequented stacks of a major library.

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To whitewash the whites

By Simon Jenkins

MERVYN REES and CHRIS DAY:
Muldergate
The Story of the Info Scandal
222p, Macmillan South Africa,
distributed by Rex Collings, £7.50.
0 86954 089 0

The South African information department scandal, which broke surface in 1978 and bubbled fiercely until the resignation of President John Vorster in 1980, can be read in two ways. To most liberal critics of South Africa it was a squalid but inevitable consequence of the moral degradation of apartheid. For many South Africans, however, the manner of its uncovering was a testament to the country's political maturity and to the extent of judicial and press freedom which still exists there. Both views probably overstate its significance.

The scandal itself was blissfully straightforward. An ambitious new man arrives to head the government information department at the unprecedentedly young age of thirty-eight. This man, Eschel Rhoodie, conceives a dramatic plan to take South Africa's case of the defensive with a drive to establish links with organizations, agencies and covert "friends of South Africa" throughout the Western world. South Africa, said Rhoodie, should break through the "paper curtain" constructed round her by the world's media.

Rhoodie worked skillfully within the government elite to secure the support of such figures as Dr Connie Mulder, her apparent to prime minister John Vorster, General Jan den Burg, the head of BOSS, and even Mr Vorster himself. Mulder in particular saw his plan as the spearhead of a new internationalism, a "refugee" (unlighted) campaign to bring about South Africa's eventual readmission to the world community. It was the "new" foreign policy, and Rhoodie was the epitome of the new Afrikaner, cosmopolitan, self-confident, extrovert, a far cry from the dour bear of English rhetoric.

The price Rhoodie put on his plan was a huge £33 millions. It depended for its success on being kept absolutely secret - as secret as any defence project. This money was duly agreed in 1972 by a cabinet committee headed by the prime minister himself.

From then on, Rhoodie's fertile, extravagant but naive political imagination ran riot. His department's

work became a trail of living villas, executive jets, expense accounts and well-heeled agents in every capital. Money was used to help United States congressmen and British MPs, a back-draft political party in Norway, the Club of Ten in London and the prime minister of the Seychelles; it established lecture tours, university research institutes, church pressure groups, book publishing houses, specialist magazines; it delved into the murky world of international arms and oil dealing. But most of all, Rhoodie (an ex-journalist) was obsessed with the press. At the expense of some £5m his department financed a newspaper in South Africa, the *Griekwa*, to counter the liberal bias of the English-language press. He tried to buy the ailing *Washington Star* in America, *L'Express* in Paris, the *Investors Chronicle* in London. He almost gained majority control of the British publishing house Morgan Grampian.

A Western journalist, publisher or politician had only to mention South Africa in a remotely sympathetic tone and a Rhoodie operator would try to stuff money in his pockets.

Rhoodie's joy-ride at government expense lasted six years. All the principal involved in it are now disgraced. Credit for his downfall can go to successive judicial inquiries, brave investigative reporting (which in South Africa means very brave), political in-fighting and ultimately, the absurdity of Rhoodie's original concept. Vorster blocked the department's funds in 1978, but it was his resignation as prime minister and Mulder's bid to succeed him which tore the scandal open. Mulder's opponents, and especially Mr P. W. Botha, found in it the perfect weapon against him. In the end he was expelled from the National Party and now haunts its right wing (Mulder is nothing if not opportunistic) with his National Conservative Party. Vorster himself later had to resign as State President.

Muldergate is the story of the affair as seen by two journalists on the *Rand Daily Mail*, Mervyn Rees and Chris Day. Involved in tracking down Rhoodie as he fled from retribution across Europe and America. It is basically the story of the case and is largely unanalytical, lapsing frequently into menus, notes, and reprinted newspaper articles. Though this yields frequent insights into the exoteric personalities who crossed their path, the narrative is spoilt by the reporters' fascination with their own process of work, colleagues' sarcasm, editors' fretful, wives and families

neglected. Rhoodie, Mulder, Vorster, Judge Mosier (the real hero of *Muldergate*) are at times just the supporting cast for Messrs Rees and Day. Much of the book is in *oratio recta* and the recounting of every verbal exchange between the journalists often looks suspiciously like subsequent dramatization. Since there is no index, the book is useless for reference purposes. And the whole suffers from being a near parody of Woodward and Bernstein's *All the President's Men*.

Nonetheless *Muldergate* is a gripping story. Rhoodie emerges as an astonishing, almost endearing, character, a flash of colour across the universal grey of Pretorian bureaucracy. And by telling their tale in the manner of a schoolboy thriller, Rees and Day perhaps unintentionally bring the infotscandal into its proper perspective.

This was no Watergate. The CIA might (even at Rhoodie's extravagance and incompetence) but hardly at his ethics. He wrecked one politician's chances of the premiership, but he destabilized no government, caused no deaths or injuries (the Schmidt murders mentioned in the book remain unsolved), and it is hard to discern what damage he could have done to South Africa's international reputation. His was essentially a budgetary crime, and what government, be it ever so liberal, is free of those? Indeed how many members of the United Nations would bother to subject such goings-on to judicial inquiry, press censure and dismissal from office?

Muldergate was chiefly an offence against Afrikaner political respectability. It trod on the old com: the Afrikaner's naivety and sense of international inferiority compared with the English community. It had less to do with apartheid than with the hypocrisy and rambling inefficiency of one-party government grown lax in its control procedures. The eventual uncovering of the scandal was a function partly of South Africa's comparatively inert politics, but partly also of the tattered shreds of judicial, legislative and press constraints on executive power which still exist in South Africa.

And here, the press must take pre-eminence. Judges, politicians and civil servants could bring Rhoodie and Mulder to account. But the press - in this case Rees, Day and *Allister Sparks's Rand Daily Mail* - provided the stage on which they did so, and that stage in South Africa is still, tenuously, free. This book at least shows how precious is that freedom.

Information, please

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924): location of any Conrad manuscripts or typescripts not reported in Gordon Lindstrand's survey of the items published in *Conradiana* in 1969; for a descriptive catalogue of the literary manuscripts.
Doald W. Rude.
Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas 79409.

E. M. Delafeld (Mrs Paul Dashwood), author of *The Diary of a Provincial Lady*: personal reminiscences of anecdotes sought for biography.
Jeffrey Spence.
34 Manor Avenue, Caterham CR3 6AN.

Alphonse Esquros (1812-76), French Romantic writer and political activist: any information about him, including his stay in England (1854-69), documents correspondence, literary associations; for a doctoral thesis.
Anthony Zielonka.
81, Lyttelton Road, Stechford, Birmingham B33 8BN.

Thomas Gresham (1519-79), financial agent of Elizabeth I at Antwerp: whereabouts of any letters written by him not yet printed or calendared in print, or listed in any printed bibliography; for a collected edition of his letters, to be published by the London Record Society.
G. D. Ramsay.
15, Charlbury Road, Oxford OX2 6JT.

John Haslam (1764-1844), Apothecary to Royal Brompton Hospital until 1816: references to his contributions to the lay periodical press, such as *Literary Gazette*, or any written or printed contemporary documents other than medical ("Barleycorn Club"), by or about him, excepting William Jervis's books; for a study of his life and relationship to Dr Wm Kitchiner, (d 1827) of the *Cook's Oracle*, etc.
Francis Shiller.
University of California, San Francisco, Department of the History of Health Sciences, Room 406 U, San Francisco, California 94143.

Historical epic poems published in English since 1960: in book, sections of a book, or chapbook form; original apes, as well as historical or epic improvisations, adaptations, re-tellings or workings; information and copies needed for an annotated bibliography.
DeWitt Clinton.
Department of English, University of Wisconsin - Whitewater, Whitewater, Wisconsin 53190.

Hurford Jones, author of *The Coloured Brat*: unpublished play performed at Gateway Theatre Club, London, in 1950; copy needed for research purposes.
G. A. Smith.
Department of General Studies, Wilfrid College of Further Education, Paget Road, Wolverhampton WY6 0DU.

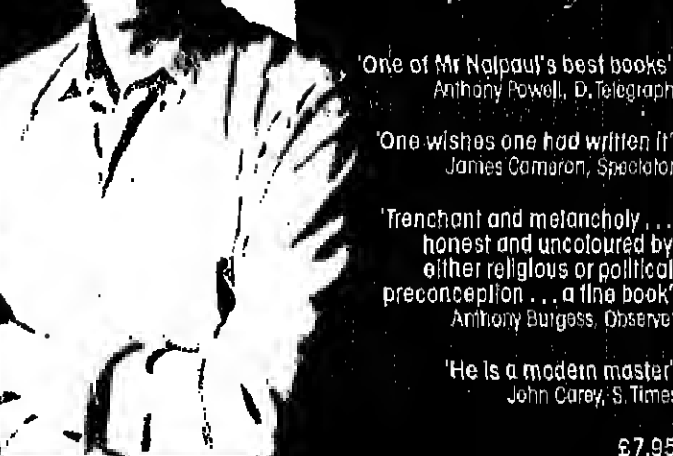
John Mackintosh MP: I have recently deposited the papers of my late husband John Mackintosh in the National Library of Scotland and have placed the absolute minimum of restrictions on access to them. Owners of letters or papers connected with him are invited to add to this collection; the originals can, if desired, be copied and returned.
Jana Maclean Mackintosh.
Nether Liberton House, Old Mill Lane, Gifford Road, Edinburgh EH16 9TZ.

Sir Robert Sangster Rait (1874-1936), sometime Principal of Glasgow University: whereabouts at his papers or of his two surviving daughters, Ruth and Margaret.
Hugh Tulloch.
Department of History, University of Bristol, Wills Memorial Building, Queens Road, Bristol BS8 1RJ.

Robert Torrens (1780-1864), political economist: whereabouts of his long-lost private papers bequeathed to his second wife Esther (née Serle) but not mentioned in her will; nor in that of Torrens's second son, Robert R. Torrens; only direct descendants by a granddaughter who married Sir Rowland Hill's only son; for a biography.
Peter L. Moore.
Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, PO Box 4, Canberra ACT 2600.

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Aspects of Irishness

By Patricia Craig

SEAN O'FAOLAIN:

Collected Stories
Volume 2
450pp. Constable. £8.95.
0 09 46210 9

"There are two types of Irishman I cannot stand. The first is always trying to behave the way he thinks the English behave. The second is always trying to behave the way he thinks the Irish behave." In the story "Persecution Mania", O'Faolain's narrator, who is probably not too far from the truth, says that the author proceeds to take as an example of the second type a political journalist who gets malice, loquaciousness, soapiness, spleen, effrontery, jocularly, feyness and cynicism into his manner out of a heightened wish to embody all the so-called national traits. Affection of Irishness is an appropriate target for ridicule in Irish fiction, and here, as elsewhere, Sean O'Faolain ridicules it with as much verve as, say, Myles na gCopaleen (Flann O'Brien), but with rather less acerbity. It is more usual, though, in O'Faolain's stories, to find ostentatious (and ostentatiously Irish) behaviour ascribed to a natural extravagance of temperament — not affected at all. Or, if it is assumed, it's assumed so thoroughly that it appears instinctive. The vivid exaggerations — "The wind that blew the legs off her, or the hms that went down Fifth Avenue at a hundred miles an hour" — barefaced blather, vigorous bellyaching, roaring and scoffing: these aspects of Irishness are aspects of these stories too. But only aspects: what interests O'Faolain more than full-blooded characterization is the subtle interaction between the complementary follies of his characters.

He handles flamboyance easily, in a traditional Irish way, but many of his most satisfactory stories — "Love's Young Dream", for example, "Love's Young Dream" or "A Sweet Colleen" — are not in the least flamboyant. These are marked by a different kind of deftness; they are graceful and discreet. As he said himself, he relishes "secret, self-deceiving ambiguities" more than the "crisp certainties of the world at large" — innocent pastures and pretences which may show up as much as they conceal. Jenny, the adulterous wife in "Lovers of the Lake", needs to elude to God as much as to her lover Flannery. To demonstrate her faith, or her penitence, or just to assert an element of her personality which she feels has been overlooked, she sets off for a bleak island in a Donegal lake — St Patrick's Purgatory. Here, barefoot pilgrims walk with outstretched arms over sharp stones or kneel praying in the rain and mud. For three days, they go without sleep and food. Are these ascetic, self-mortifying, lugubrious Irish Catholics? Not a bit of it, they are the plain people — though they do derive some obscure moral benefit from the exercise, difficult for the uninitiated to apprehend, which puts them in touch with the spirit of the early Christian church. Flannery, in O'Faolain's story, follows Jenny to the island not, as she at first supposes, for the purposes of mockery, but simply in an attempt to understand the peculiarities of her nature. (He is a successful Dublin surgeon and aesthet.) He is a tolerant and worldly ex-Catholic — distrusts extremes, particularly extremes of religious feeling.

Further ambiguities of feeling and intention in comprehension bear life "Love's Young Dream" — O'Faolain here is for nearly ironic titles — which is told retrospectively with the adult narrator continually intervening to interpret and comment on his youthful, amorous experiences at sixteen or so. Each of us was trying to instruct the other without exposing the fact that neither of us had anything to reveal. Comment on the meaning restores the meaning, as Eliot said, "in a

different form": here, sharper and more complex. There's a marvellous sense of late childhood, of the countryside around the Curragh, of security, gaiety, oddity and interpenetration about this story, undercut, of course, by retrospective melancholy and knowingness. The balance is impressively maintained.

The folly of trying to give substance to an illusion that thrives on evasiveness and secrecy is the subject of "One Night in Turin", whose mock-lavish opening — "One robin-singing, cloud-racing, wet-grassed Monday morning last April" — seems carefully designed to make you imagine, wrongly, that you're in for a piece of overblown Celtic whimsy. The hero of this story, in the end, experiences "the depths of . . . delight and misery", these emotions occurring simultaneously for maximum impact. O'Faolain's characters, it's true, generally go to the most out of their predicament; everything is felt to an extreme. The small contortions are turned into high comedy: the behaviour of the dotty old aunt in "Dividends", for example, whose inability to grasp the rudiments of a simple financial arrangement may be seen as a peculiar kind of canniness. (This lady is labelled openly with the author's name, re-augmented — Whelan — which raises an interesting point about the convergence of fiction and autobiography in the stories.)

Adolescent holidays spent "biting under dripping hedges in West Cork, talking Irish to old men with mouths full of bad teeth and minds full of primordial memories" gave Sean O'Faolain a taste for heroic absurdities: a stint with the anti-Treaty forces in the Civil War of 1922-23 provided him with special insight into the republican mentality; inspiration with the course of Irish political thinking after 1923 made him sceptical about the integrity and the *sancti* of politicians. Irish philistinism was a source of bitterness too; he lived, after all, in what Brian Moore has referred to as "the book-banning Ireland of the Twenties through to the Fifties", and his own first collection of stories, *Midsummer Night Madness* (1932) was an early object of suspicion for the Censorship Board. There is nothing sour or denigrated about O'Faolain's social criticism, though; he keeps his comments on this subject playful and unimpassioned. They are none the less pointed: to call a popu-

lar newspaper the *Daily Crucifix* tells us something, after all, about the role of the church in Ireland. And when of the soulful shop-keeping dichotomy, the round tower standing aloof and the greasy till? O'Faolain's revolutionaries — turned — businessmen simply capitalize on the glamour of nationalism in their trade-names: Celtic Corsets, Gaelic Gowns. "I was working for Ireland", declares Joe in "No Country for Old Men". Building up the country we fought for." And what was he doing? Manufacturing corsets 'with designs from the Lindisfarne Gospels on 'em'.

You might think this is going too far; but the story is so richly ambivalent and complicated that it easily accommodates the small piece of blatant fun. O'Faolain takes a couple of elderly Dubliners, Civil War veterans, one of them a prosperous company director, the other his employee, and sets them blundering along the border between the North and the South in the aftermath of an IRA attack on a barracks (it is the late 1950s; not the current IRA campaign but the last one, which had more of force and less of ferocity about it). The men (who are implicitly) are lumbered moreover with the body of a dead terrorist. "Once more they struggled up the road, bearing the youth between them." What's also dead and gone, of course, is their own youth — the idealism fostered, the chimerical republic. One — the cleverer one — gets a taste of exhilaration from the present fondly, understandingly, the other holds on to his natural shrewdness and caution — purposeless, as it turns out, O'Faolain uses one of his most effective devices — the striking mischance presented comically, or at least briskly and laconically — to let us know what happened: "Less than half an hour later they were back in the North, facing the guns of a Northern patrol." Instead of asking their way into the South and safety they have taken a wrong turning.

This story, for all its virtuosity and humour, is full of matter; many issues are raised and aired in the course of one significant night. It's one of O'Faolain's best; but even so, the inclusion in this excellent volume demands, and repays, the closest consideration. The stories are diverting and disquieting by turns, in the most illuminating manner.

Looking at the consequences

By Anthony Delius

ALAN PATON:

Ah, But Your Land is Beautiful
271pp. Cape. £6.95.
0 224 01981 3

Not only has the depth, fervour and organization of racism in South Africa given a new word — apartheid — to the dictionary of world politics, but it has also made a sizeable contribution to the number of the world's books, from academic monographs to light fiction. The subject has engendered verse and plays (among them what must be one of the best comedies of the twentieth century, *Seven Years in Debut*) and has been the basis of TV dramas and discussions with such regularity that it is startling to note viewers.

Alan Paton, who could make a fair claim to having sparked off much of this literary activity, has now published a novel looking back over the social and political consequences of all that he had warned against in his first novel over thirty years ago. The success of *Cry, the Beloved Country* awakened many other writers to the world-wide interest in what had hitherto seemed the worthy but rather dreary subject of race relations. Paton's new novel, *Ah, But Your Land is Beautiful*, is a sequel to *Cry, the Beloved Country*, and is a more realistic and less idealistic account of the same period.

At least that is the impression given by the publishers, who

announce: "It is the first novel in a trilogy . . . which may even surpass the extraordinary impact of Paton's classic. Even the new novel's title, ironically echoing the title of its predecessor, seems to invite comparison and present a challenge. The later novel begins where the earlier one left off, when the apartheid of the new Nationalist Government had begun to entrench in law and further institutionalize the slightly more haphazard race discrimination of former days. The style of *Cry, the Beloved Country* is reproduced almost exactly in the new book with its use of longish passages of explanatory dialogue and sequences of terse dramatic dialogue, with occasional Casanova-like interventions by the author. And again it is from one of these interventions that the new book takes its title."

Ah, but the land is beautiful. It is the land where Sister Alden met her unrepentant death, and 14-year-old Johnnie Reynolds hanged himself in his bedroom because the white high school turned him away.

Some of the characters, too, have a family resemblance to those of the earlier novel, but are brought forward into more troubled times. The new novel is an amalgam of fact and fiction: Imaginary characters rub shoulders with many who are living or have recently lived in the real South Africa of today. A whole representative host of South African humanity moves through the book in gathering agitation — while liberal Indian merchants, officials of the Department of Justice, black head-

Magic and poison

By John Ryle

PETER CAREY:

Bliss
396pp. Faber. £6.50.
0 571 11769 4

Now that the regular stuff of serious fiction has become darkness, madness, dope, odd sex and dire futurity, it is worth singling out from the risk of such fashionable perversity an author with a truly striking vision of the dark side of the family romance, and the fraught times that engender it. Peter Carey's slender but compelling collection of short stories, *The Fat Man in History* (1980, now published in paperback as *Exotic Pleasures*, the better to tap the perversity market) contains some vivid fantasies of the near future, a future that one character refers to sardonically as "the most picturesque phase of capitalism". Carey's first novel links these futures to our present in the story of an advertising man whose temporary death from heart failure jolts him into a radically novel view of the world he inhabits and his own right place in it.

Harry Joy takes about us long to die as Tristram Shandy took to get born, and his story has the same ingeniously anecdotal structure. In notebooks he charts the topography of hell, as he now perceives his pleasant bourgeois life to be, with a sad compulsion. His guide to these infernal regions is Honey Barbara, hippie and part-time whore whom he meets after leaving his wife, who herself dreams of leaving him and heading the other way: New York, capitalism's heart of darkness, where she will become a hotshot adwoman. Their son dreams of drug-running in South America; their daughter dreams of revolution. They are people, Honey Barbara reckons, with trunks of dreams and ideas, but nothing in the present.

Carey is alert about dreams and delusions. Harry's new vision of the ugliness and despair in the here and now releases all kinds of magic and poison in the family network. He leaves home; he is committed to a mental hospital by his son; his wife takes over his advertising agency; his partner takes over his wife; she dies of cancer; he leaves the city for the rain forest where Honey Barbara

lives with her father, a beekeeper, in an enclave of communards and cult-followers. (This is where bliss comes in.)

Here Harry remembers the world of his own father, who read palms and told stories, "stories that drifted like downy seed and took root in unlikely places". In the transition to a longer form of fiction, Carey has retained a notion of the story, in its various guises of dream, legend and anecdote, as something more solid and elemental than the elaborate architectonics of the novel. *Bliss* is, in fact, a novel largely about stories — marriage as a meeting of two family mythologies, advertisements as a kind of alchemy of the imagination opposed to the natural magic of the wild — and how stories can trap people or lead them astray, or take them, once in a while, to blissful conclusions. Carey uses coarse elements of farce — elephants that sit on cars, funny waiters or wives and lovers caught *flagrant delicto* — and ancient narrative devices ("when he was about to die in a foreign country years later . . .") with a stylish insouciance. They work perhaps because the made of his narrative is not strictly realistic, and because of an implication that the reality of people in cities who read books is itself some form of false consciousness. There is a nostalgia for the spoken word, the rapid audience of children or forest dwellers; and a pantheistic yearning for the silence of the forest.

When Harry finally escapes to the pastoral realm and fades into the greenwood, the narrative does suffer a little genre-slippage and the reader cannot help missing the blithe acidity of Carey's more swart passages. The happy hippies in the forest bear a dispiriting resemblance to hobbits. It is touching, though, that a writer of Carey's gifts, one whose short stories are so bleak and doom-laden, should be lured into this sentimentality by a nostalgia for happy endings.

The second issue of *Short Story Monthly*, edited by Flora Phillips, is now available (78pp. Armadary, Methven Road, Whitecraigs, Glasgow. 80p) and contains new stories by Jack Trevor Story and Tim Owens, as well as previously published work by Doris Lessing, Heinrich Böll, Fred Uggahue, Kazuo Ishiguro and Frank Yuohy. The first issue included stories by Flannery O'Connor, Paul Theroux and John Updike.

rather more functional than flesh and blood. It is some of the minor characters who come alive, such as the poison-pen letter writer, Proud White Christian Woman, and Prem's parents — the wealthy Indian merchant, M.K. Bodasingh. And yet sharp-tongued Mrs Bodasingh, even Mrs Bodasingh seems to be speaking out of Paton's own occasional despondency when she turns on her husband and his friend and cries, "You don't want to be liberated. . . . You'd much rather be governed by Dr. Malan than by Chief Lutuli and Dr. Monty."

South African readers, or some of them, might wonder if there isn't lurking in the subconscious of all the book that reluctance of the white majority in the country to be ruled by the black majority. The very liberalism Paton himself espouses may be suspect to some, as wanting to dilute the possibility of that rule. We are of course presented in the book with many black individuals: yet curiously enough there is little impression of the overwhelming African majority. We seem to peer at the Africans from the superstitious uire of a white world, administrative or intellectual. This may, of course, be a subtle device of Paton's to present the general condition of white South Africans, but it detracts from the comprehensibility of the novel. Or perhaps Paton is going to take us deeper into the society and identity of the black majority when he publishes the next novel of his trilogy. Judging by his achievement in *Ah, But Your Land is Beautiful* his powers are nowhere near falling.

BIOGRAPHY

RODNEY ENGEN:

Kate Greenaway
A Biography
240pp. MacDonald. £14.95.
0 354 04200 9

"No one could draw roses like Kate Greenaway", said her friend Mrs Allingham. The tragedy, for Kate's own emotional well-being, was that she could not only draw the emblem but recreate the girl, nine-year-old Rosie Poise, Rose La Touche, whom Ruskin fell in love with, proposed marriage to, and lost. When Rose died after estrangement and madness, Ruskin sought substitutes in entertaining local schoolgirls, and by devoting the images of innocence and classic childish beauty he found in Kate Greenaway's early books. But whereas Ruskin loved the images, so very different from their plain and dumpy maker, Kate fell in love with Ruskin himself. And whereas Kate's genius was for inventing and drawing quaint, nostalgic clothes and accessories for her figures (would her career nowadays have more resembled Laura Ashley's?), Ruskin wanted these done away with, in studies of "girlies" meant for his eyes:

As we've got so far as taking off hats (he wrote to her), I trust we may in time get to take off just a little more — say mittens — and then — perhaps — even shoes and — (for ladies) even . . . stockings — and then . . .

It was a relationship conducted chiefly by correspondence. Ruskin and Kate Greenaway corresponded for two years before they met in 1882, and the letters went on, daily at times, until Ruskin's death eighteen years later. Rodney Engen's is the second full-scale biography of Kate Greenaway, and the first to be able to quote the surviving letters without impediment. The first book, by M. H. Spielmann and G. S. Layard (father of Auden's "loony Layard"), had to contend with John Severn, Ruskin's cousin and protector, penning through anything in the Master's letters that would suggest more than "an ordinary affectionate friendship". Their book, published in 1905, four years after Kate Greenaway's death, was in any case a work of piety (it began: "About the name of Kate Greenaway there floats a perfume so sweet and fragrant that even at the moment of her death we thought more of the artist than of the friend we had lost"). Engen's account of the Ruskin-Greenaway friendship is naturally, therefore, the core of his book.

Kate Greenaway was the daughter of John Greenaway, a wood engraver of good reputation and precarious livelihood. Shortly after Kate, his second daughter, was born, he decided to leave the firm of Landells and set up on his own, on the strength of an important-seeming commission for new illustrations to Dickens. This project was so crucial to his career that he appears to have sent his family away from their home in the new East London artisan suburb of Hoxton to stay with relatives in a Nottinghamshire village. Rolleston, so that he could work without distraction. The parting lasted two years (was this thought all odd or unjust at the time? Mr Engen does not speculate), and the work was all in vain, for the publisher of the Dickens edition went bankrupt, and Greenaway was never paid.

Fair Kate, this episode was the beginning of a lifelong feeling that Rolleston was her real home, a country her mind could always re-imagine when London or adult life weighed heavy. "I suppose I went to a very young before I could really remember and that is why I have such a wild delight in cowslips and apple blossoms. They always give me the strange feeling of trying to remember, as if I had known them in a former world." Rolleston was comparatively prosperous farmland, its inhabitants engagingly old-fashioned in dress and sentiment; and on later

Tiptoeing through the cowslips

By Mari Prichard

family visits Kate always saw it at its best, in summer. Smell wonder, then, that in adulthood it was always summer in the countryside of her imagination. Edmund Evans, her printer, complained of her failure to love any but calm-weather skies, blue and white. Even as a child her heights of excitement and delight — at parties, far instance — would be followed by depression, deep "days of gloom" and melancholy reflection that such happiness could not last and "joy surfed turns to sorrow". Each return from Rolleston re-engraved her sense of loss:

I live in a London street, then I long and long
To be the whole day the sweet flowers
among

she wrote in *Marigold Garden*, in characteristically awkward but heartfelt nursery verse. Eventually she made enough money from her books to buy her own house, but it was no further out of London than Hampstead, and Ruskin, from the fastness of his Lakeland mansion, deplored the compromise.

Shy, short-sighted and aware of her gracelessness, Kate hated growing up, and fled from most of the attempts to educate her conventionally at such establishments as the Misses Fives' Ladies' School (where the cross-eyed Miss Anne Fives produced in Kate a trembling fit that lasted for days). But her family were sympathetic ("I was never told I was tiresome when I was young, but I was constantly told I was odd"), and her father fostered her artistic ability until she was old enough to undergo professional training. She undertook the extraordinarily rigorous National Course of Art Instruction, instituted by Sir Henry Cole (alias the children's editor "Felix Summerly"), and eventually enrolled in the Female School of Art at South Kensington, one of the predecessors of the Royal College of Art.

Cole's aim was to produce fine industrial art and decoration, and Kate won a national award for a set of tile designs. When she then tried to study life-drawing at Heatherley's, she was refused entry on the grounds that she was too young. "Everything is confused, I never know day or date," she wrote to Edmund Evans's wife. "Words can hardly say the sort of man he is — perfect — simply . . . Mr Ruskin wants me to stay, wants me to tell him things about colour and puts it in such a way I can't well leave."

She did leave, after a month which had dispelled some of Ruskin's darker moods as well. But back in London she felt only loneliness and loss; and from then on for some twelve years she lived for the excitement that she experienced from Ruskin's attention, and languished whenever she felt neglected. Ruskin by turns praised her work in glowing terms that his contemporaries found

embarrassing (the most celebrated instance was his 1883 Oxford lecture), set her unconventional drawing lessons and correspondence courses in perspective, and tried to fend her off when she seemed too dependent on his direction. When she made plain her love and desperate need of him, he indulged in virtuous letters adorned with kisses. "Yes, that is for your very own and here are kisses for you and being so very good." Sometimes he demanded her presence, sometimes he put her off. Joan Severn wrote in 1888:

The characteristic Greenaway children and clothes began to appear in valentines and Christmas cards. Then when Kate was thirty-three, Edmund Evans the colour printer took his celebrated gamble, and brought out *Under the Window*, a book of Kate's own verses and drawings, delicately wood-engraved, in a first edition (by Evans's own account) of 20,000 copies, which sold out immediately. The book seemed to him every possible mark at once. It was well designed and nice, delicate and "aesthetic", nostalgic and charming; and the Greenaway name was made. (Only three years later, in 1882, Mr Bulfinch in *Vice Versa* was returning home from the horrors of Dr Grimston's school to find his house "lit up by Chinese lanterns and crowded with little 'Kate Greenaway' maidens".) At which point a mutual friend, knowing Ruskin to be an admirer of her work, encouraged him to write to her, to promote her success and to help mould her talent.

It was a role Ruskin already knew to be dangerous to his protégés. Rossetti and Burne-Jones had each escaped and gone their own ways. Young women were easier to manage, and his facility for gaining their adoration was already well-known. Kate Greenaway, humble, anxious and retiring, was easy prey to his charm. Three years after the first letter, he began calling her "Kate" and invited her to Cumberland. She was greatly afraid of going, afraid of seeming dull during a long visit. "You are not to make so much of me, for I am not in the least a Princess. Wouldn't it be nice if I were, to emerge suddenly, brilliant and splendid?" But, as Mr Engen shows, Ruskin charmed away her nervousness, and lifted her life on to another plane. "Everything is confused, I never know day or date," she wrote to Edmund Evans's wife. "Words can hardly say the sort of man he is — perfect — simply . . . Mr Ruskin wants me to stay, wants me to tell him things about colour and puts it in such a way I can't well leave."

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Folly

I also from a circle standing on a square
And cock my dunce's cap at the firmament
Keeping my ignorance tapered to a clear
Sugar loaf point above the dark green ferment.

A lord's pride made me to relieve the poor
With heavy work lifting my spirit, and the rich
With light step ascending my gabbro state
To admire the land, they owned and wish for more.

My form is epicene: male when the gold
Seed of the sun comes matting through my skin
Of old gray stucco: female when the mould
Of moonlight makes my witch-pup cone obscene.

My fovee does bricked up against vandals, still
With moisture, scrawled with muck, I crest the hill.

Richard Murphy

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commentary

How I lived in a very big house and found God

By Kingsley Amis

Bridhead Revisited
Granada TV

Evelyn Waugh was a marvellous writer, but one of a sort peculiarly likely to write a bad book at any moment. The worst of his, worse even than *The Loved One*, must be *Bridhead Revisited*. But long before the Granada TV serial came along it was his most enduringly popular novel; the current Penguin reprint is the nineteenth in its line. The chief reason for this success is obviously and simply that here we have a whacking, heavily romantic book about nobles. (Indeed, almost any old book about nobles seems sure to do at least reasonably well in the English-speaking world, as is suggested by the prosperous career of Nancy Mitford, for instance.)

Nobles, of course, are in themselves not at all bad people to write or read about, and to take the small and inevitable step from nobles to snobs, they too are perfectly harmless as such and, with their eye for social nuance, actually well suited for writing novels. We may infer that a given novelist is a snob and still wish him well, though we will perhaps feel a little different if he brandishes his class in our faces. The trouble comes when, as with *Bridhead*, snobbery corrupts judgement.

It is as if Evelyn Waugh came to believe that since about all he looked for in his companions was wealth, rank, Roman Catholicism (where possible) and beauty (where appropriate), those same attributes and no more would be sufficient for the central characters in a long novel, enough or getting on for enough, granted a bit of style thrown in, to establish them as both glamor-

ous and morally significant. That last blurring produced a book I would rather expect a conscientious Catholic to find repulsive, but such matters are none of my concern. Certainly the author treats those characters with an almost cringing respect, imploring throughout that they are important and interesting in some way over and above what we are shown of them.

The Flyte family, or the Marquis of Marchmain's family, or the family whose house Bridhead is, or what you will, are a band of bibles. They hang about, idle rich in an extra sense, given too little to do by the author. Ironically, the one he himself regards as rather a bore, Lord Bridhead or Bridley, the elder son, emerges as the least boring of them because, on his smug little face, he is the most fully shaped as a character. As a result he transfers successfully to the screen, with the admirable Simon Jones giving the most sympathetic and enjoyable performance of the six. Elsewhere, the cast leave their work cut out.

In the original, there is nothing much to Lady Marchmain, mother of Bridley, Sebastian, Julia and Cordelia, also not fully acknowledged as a pal-mum figure, long-serving hostess to Charles Ryder, the narrator. She is just trying and predictably failing to keep Sebastian away from the drink and is the agent of something more repressive, even destructive, something the self-exiled Lord Marchmain ran away from long ago? We never learn; the conversation shifts to her dead brother, but nothing emerges about them either. All this, or what there is of this, is no more than reproduced in the serial. As repeatedly happens, the vacancy of the novel cannot help being thrown into prominence by the mere process of screening, the removal of the filter of literary presentation, but here the authority of

the actress, Claire Bloom, makes it seem to matter less at the time.

Under-employment grips the figure of Lord Marchmain even more severely. All he is really needed for is dying a doctrinally edifying death near the end, and Waugh earlier allows him no more than a walk-on, a glimpse of him being in his house in Venice and comparing Italian with Austrian pastries. But no television company is going to get its accountant's permission to send a unit to Venice and end up with a couple of minutes of screen-time. As it is we are treated to nearly half an hour of eventless sightseer blown up from a mere nine pages, a straggling Martin commercial rounded off with some corny Latin wisdom (all out of the novel) from the old fellow's girlfriend, or "mistress" as she is quaintly called. This bit, coming where it did (second half of second episode), must have done a good deal to depress the ratings. The lead-up to Marchmain's death is most affecting, but not particularly more so than any other character's would have been with Laurence Olivier to play him, and neither book nor adaptation has told us enough about him for his last-minute return to the bosom of the Church to seem very momentous.

Let me pause briefly and admonish those critics who, after laying about the acting, direction, etc with a will, join in a drowsy chorus of "But it must be admitted that the whole thing looks ravishing." Well yes, but so it bloody should. From the way some of them go on you would think the camera-team had had a hand in building Christ Church or St Mark's instead of just pointing their instrument in approximately the right direction and remembering to take the cap off the snout. Any producer will tell you that keeping the public out of view is the real task.

Back, with a faint groan, to those Flytes. Cordelia is no less boring and officious on the screen than in the novel, and Phoebe Nicholls could do little to redeem her occasional lurches into poeticality. Such lurches are far more thoroughgoing and harder to bear in the case of Julia. There is nothing in this bad book worse, more embarrassing, more saddening, than her long pseudo-hysterical tirade after Bridley's "betrayal" of her behaviour as illustrated by a prodigy of egotism, visibly subject to inebriation and in a way that suggests insufficient opposition in early life, about as charming as that of Brenda Last, whom she powerfully evokes in her treatment of Rex Mottram. The most plausible explanation of her final dismissal of Charles Ryder is nothing more religious than a desire to be bitchy to him with God to back her up - after all, he (Ryder) did try to cross her over getting a priest for her father. But Diana Quick contrives to make this scene quite touching, no worse than something out of Graham Greene.

There remains Sebastian. Every time I read the book I ask myself if there is anything to him at all, and the answer is always no. The related question of what it is that drives an indolent, affected, greedy, queerish young nob to the bottle perhaps of "But it must be admitted that the whole thing looks ravishing." Well yes, but so it bloody should. From the way some of them go on you would think the camera-team had had a hand in building Christ Church or St Mark's instead of just pointing their instrument in approximately the right direction and remembering to take the cap off the snout. Any producer will tell you that keeping the public out of view is the real task.

The most disagreeable of the central trio, however, is undoubtedly Ryder, priggish, prickish, on the make. John Beaver to Julia's Brenda. Though cautiously taciturn in company, he is loquacious enough in his asides and comments. Something of these, not much in total but too much, John Mortimer's script, preserves in voice-over. The producers evidently mistook for vivid writing the sickening floweriness of a great deal of Ryder's commentary, headlining on the front of their publicity brochure one of his most novelistic bits of attitudinizing: "My theme is memory, that winged host that soared about me one grey morning of war-time. But as far as I remember we are spared that shaming language-of-youth stuff, also the noble wine stuff and most of the sniffy

stuff about the awful people who are taking over the world, so that, for instance, the famous dinner with Mottram (Charles Keating - excellent), in the book an orgy of vulgar dissipation, becomes simply funny. But, even trimmed down like this, Ryder's character is sufficiently offensive, or would have been without intelligent direction and the fine acting of Jeremy Irons, which between them transform him into a human being. An adaptation which so much of the time follows the original with calamitous fidelity here triumphantly departs from it.

One grave defect common to the portrayals of Cordelia, Julia, Sebastian and Julia is that they are not nearly as good as they are. Those four are nothing if not upper-class in a deeper sense of the construction than usual. But the actors all put glottal stops in front of initial vowels, pronounce the H's in unstressed words ("he has lost his way") and use a German or King's Road short A ("the cult sub on the muih") and a short E that is half way to "jat sat". Diana Quick calls her papa "poppa". Andrews stresses the second syllable in "café". Irons sounds the T in "often". Fault-finding? Well, producers who proudly describe how, unable to use pullet's eggs, they had a lot of pullet's eggs painted were not short of time. Perhaps it was decided that to have those four talking in the way young nobles between the wars actually talked would blow away any rays of sympathy and esteem they might have managed to acquire.

The TV version is very good whenever it comes to the good parts of the novel, all of them significantly irrelevant to the main issue: the army scenes, the interesting short story about Julia's marriage to Mottram, the lively sketch of the General's wife, Anthony Blanche, Mr Samgras - John Gielgud, Jane Asher, Nicholas Grace, John Grillo, all first-rate. But there was not much to be done about the boredom at the centre. The mistake was in the time allotted, or in picking the book in the first place. I hope no one will draw the false conclusion that faithful adaptations of serious novels can never be successful.

The production is very thorough and professional and might even have been called stylish if it had not tried a little hard to be. It could have done without the irritating convention whereby, for the instance, two people at the far end of a restaurant are audible to us but not to those at the next table. The period stuff is fun to look at and the storm at sea is fascinating. I think the music is just right, grand, sad and rather brassy.

TLS Children's books

Learning to dwell in possibility

By Gareth B. Matthews

A father who pretends he doesn't know what is in the parcel his child has given him, feels as if he is guessing, feels as if he thought it might be alive and bite him. But he doesn't really think it might be alive, he really knows that it's chocolate, he's only pretending to wonder what it is. But since he pretends to himself that he doesn't know he is only pretending? Shall we say that for the moment he forgets he knows, that for the moment he wonders? When he turns quickly to fire on the wolves who are gaining in spite of the efforts of two exhausted rocking chairs, he is really excited. He is pretending that wolves are behind but he isn't pretending he thinks that wolves are behind. He feels they are, he sort of believes they are, he half believes it. No, it isn't that he half believes it, he doesn't. It is more that just for the moment he believes it. The illusion is fragile. It breaks if you touch it. At least it does if you touch it with an unsympathetic hand. John Wisdom: *Other Minds*, 1952.

Jean Piaget sought to measure the cognitive development of children by tracking their progression towards ever more nearly adequate concepts of the world, and of its contents. Thus the child's concept of a shadow, according to Piaget in *The Child's Conception of Physical Causality*, 1930, is first the idea of stuff that emanates from objects and belongs to the night; then it is the idea of emanating dark stuff that flees the light; and only finally, years later, is it the idea of an unilluminated area produced by an object that obstructs the source of light. As with successive concepts of a shadow, so also, Piaget thought, with successive concepts of thinking, dreaming, causality, life, time, consciousness, and the rest (*The Child's Conception of the World*, 1929).

What reveals the concepts a child has at age so and so? Piaget's methods, especially in the first decades of his research, were disarmingly simple and direct: he asked children questions. But suppose their answers were not serious. Suppose the children were "romancing" or, even worse, "rotting"? Piaget found no easy way to eliminate the non-serious answer. But he remained wedded to the view that it was only the settled convictions of children, however those could be got at, that would disclose real progress in cognitive development.

The quotation from John Wisdom, with which I began, suggests a different

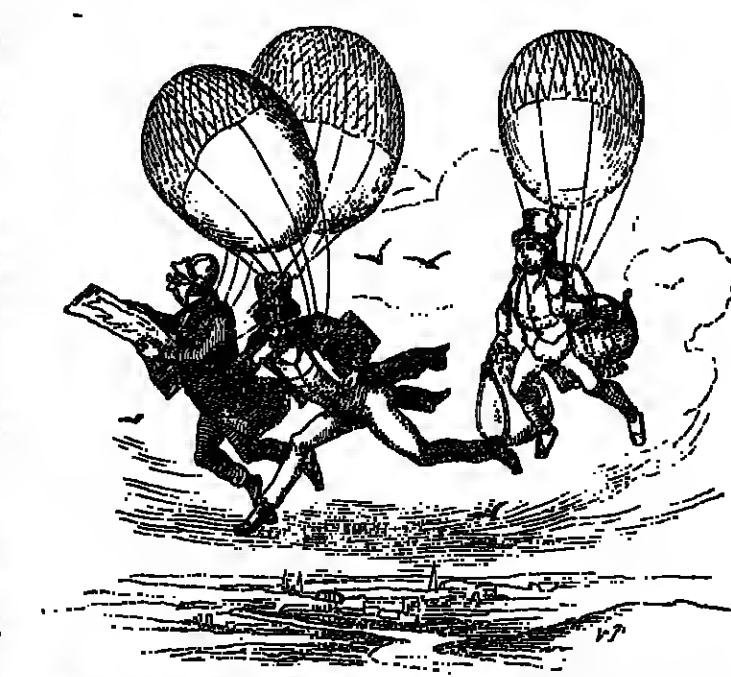
dimension to cognitive development, a dimension Piaget largely ignored. It is the dimension of what philosophers call "propositional attitudes". Take the proposition that the cow jumped over the moon. In theory, I can assume any one of a number of different attitudes towards that proposition. I can imagine, suppose, fear, hope, believe, disbelieve, pretend, pretend to believe, or be under the illusion that the cow jumped over the moon. I can also consider, wonder, or doubt whether she did, though I can't know that she did, since, in fact, it is false that the cow jumped over the moon. (I can, of course, know that that is what the cow did in the nursery rhyme, but that is something else.)

Learning how to move about among attitudes to propositions - doubting, imagining, wondering, pretending to believe - is, in Emily Dickinson's phrase, learning how to "dwell in possibility". Children's poems and stories give a child the materials to construct a rich variety of propositions. Especially if those poems and stories include literature of different genres, they also give a child practice in taking up the propositional attitudes.

These two dimensions of cognitive development, concept formation (say, getting the idea of what a shadow is) and the deployment of propositional attitudes (considering whether, or pretending to believe, that that dark area over there is a shadow) fit nicely together. Conceptual possibility is a constraint on what can be "seriously imagined", as well as, of course, a constraint on what can be believed or known. Thus one can't seriously imagine (though one can pretend to believe) that shadows owe their existence to a ubiquitous army of shadow painters; and the reason is that it belongs to the very concept of a shadow that it be, somehow, cast by the person or thing whose shadow it is.

The fit between concept clarification and the successful deployment of propositional attitudes can be illustrated further by what is said about the character, Tiktok, in L. Frank Baum's *Ozma of Oz*, a sequel to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy and her companion, a talking hen, come upon Tiktok in the chamber of a rock.

He was only about as tall as Dorothy herself, and his body was round as a ball and made out of burnished copper. Also his head and limbs were copper, and these were jointed or hinged to his body in a peculiar way, with metal caps



Twenty-first-century American laundries as foreseen in 1852: it was thought that a steampower in England might last "a whole day". The drawing illustrates Hans Christian Andersen's story "In a Thousand Years' Time", which also predicts airships overcrowded with passengers, an electromagnetic cable under the Atlantic and a channel tunnel. The picture is by Vilhelm Pedersen whose work appeared in the original Danish editions of the stories. It is taken from *Tales and Stories by Hans Christian Andersen* (304pp. Seattle: University of Washington Press, £10.50, 0 295 956769 7), an annotated edition of twenty-seven stories in a new translation by Patricia L. Conroy and Sven H. Rosset intended for "the growing audience of adults". The book also contains a biography of Andersen and an introduction to his work.

over the joints, like the armor worn by knights in days of old.

Tiktok's label proclaims that this "double-action, extra-responsive, thought-creating, perfect-talking mechanical man... thinks, speaks, acts and does everything but live". Can one seriously imagine that a non-living artifact, a mechanical man (or a computer), might have thoughts? Or does it belong to the very concept of a "thought-creating" being that it be alive?

The "directions for using" Tiktok say that "for thinking" he should be wound under his left arm (marked "1"), "for speaking" under his right arm ("2") and "for walking and action" he should be wound in the middle of his back ("3"). Dorothy and her friend try winding at "1".

"He doesn't seem any different", the hen remarks, obviously disappointed. "Why, of course not," replies Dorothy, "he is only thinking now". To find out what he is thinking, she explains, one must wind up his

"talk". They do. "Good morning, little girl, good morning, Mrs Hen", intones Tiktok in a voice that anticipates the familiar robot speech of today.

Reflecting on Tiktok's label, and on the idea that Tiktok is not alive, Dorothy recalls the Tin Woodman of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. "He was alive as we are", she says,

'cause he was born a real man, and got his tin body a little at a time - first a leg and then a finger and then an ear - for the reason that he had so many accidents with his axe, and cut himself up in a very careless manner.

This argument from continuity depends upon the principle that anything that is once alive will continue to be so, even through piece-by-piece replacement, as long as its life functions are preserved. Might then a living being be made up entirely of inorganic materials? That is certainly the conclusion of the argument. But

doesn't the very concept of a living being include the provision that its materials (all? some? most?) be organic? And what then about the possibility of implanting in a living human being a mechanical heart? Or kidney? Or pair of eyes? What about implanting a transistORIZED brain? If one couldn't seriously imagine that there is a being like the Tin Woodman, then the principle that got us to the unacceptable conclusion must be rejected.

Of course literature also helps us to form, refine and reflect on our attitudes towards non-propositional objects - towards nature, towards parents and siblings, towards friends and strangers, towards life. And sometimes it does this in a distinctively philosophical way. A story may invite one to consider, reflectively, whether, as John Wisdom puts it in *Philosophy and Psychology*, a given attitude is, or is not, "well placed".

In *Thick Everlasting* Natalie Babbitt tells us an engrossing story of a family that inadvertently drank an elixir of life and were thereby condemned to an everlasting life of never growing old. The heroine of the story has a free choice as to whether she, too, will have a similarly stunted, yet everlasting, life. Both she and the reader are nudged, gently, to the conclusion that a life worth living has a beginning, a middle and an end. (Compare the philosophical discussion of a similar story in Bernard Williams's *The Makropulos case: reflections on the tedium of immortality*, in *Problems of the Self*, 1973.) The story makes the heroine's decision an understandable one. The process in the reader of coming to find that decision understandable is a process of considering whether prevalent attitudes towards mortality are really well placed.

Tom's *Midnight Garden*, by Philip Pearce, invites us to dwell in another sort of possibility. Tom, exiled to a childless uncle and aunt while his brother recovers from the measles, learns, accidentally, that he can escape the tedium of his surroundings by slipping out at midnight into a Victorian garden; in the garden he can enjoy playing with a little girl named Hatty.

The world of the midnight garden is strange in many ways. In it Tom is invisible to many people around him, though not, fortunately, to Hatty. Time itself is strange in that world. From the perspective of our world, things that take place in that world take no time at all. Moreover, Tom finds on successive visits to that

Outside the garden

By Patricia Craig

Last Summer's Child
BBC TV

Susan Hill's story "The Badness Within Him" is very short indeed; only eight and a half pages in the Penguin edition of *A Bit of Singing and Dancing*. How does it adapt as a fifty-five minute television play? Well, in this case adaptation obviously involves expansion, but there are plenty of other alterations too. The story is lengthened, elaborated, prettified; moved back in time (to the early 1930s) and given a particular seaside holiday location (a village in Cornwall) instead of a generalized one. It loses two rather static characters (a girl and her baby) and gains some others who contribute more strikingly to the summery, felicitous atmosphere. It gets a title better suited to the full-blown mood of nostalgia and regretfulness which has taken it over.

What isn't tampered with is the central character's state of mind, which provides a theme for both story and play. Col, at thirteen or so, has acquired a black dog on his shoulder, as his sister Jess never tires of telling him. Col and Jess, who used to be friends, are now, at the end of childhood, all but estranged; and besides, Jess has brought along a friend of her own, Laura, who is better able to enter into the game of talking about the boys from the rectory. Paled meritment is one of the play's motifs; these fourteen-year-olds "mingle and dole" as vividly as the one in Steve Smith's poem "The Boy in the Garden" while Col

glowers and mooches indoors. He is cut off from hilarity, by his own choice, and from all kinds of pleasantness except communion with his mother, Rose, about whom he nourishes romantic feelings. Attachment to mother, detachment from father: this is a common pattern of family affection, and sure enough Col's relations with his father, who soon arrives fuming and puffing from London, are marked by reserve and unease.

Anthony Bate is the father who imposes his solid, unendearing presence, ruins people's perfect day, speaks severely to his boy and imparts all kinds of exigencies at the office, to his wife's dismay. Earlier we have seen him, seated at his desk, raise a hand to his chest in a gesture which, on the screen, portends disaster. This duly occurs, on an idyllic afternoon. The family party is gathered on the beach; Col, whose inappropriate discontent has been getting on everyone's nerves, takes himself off to the top of a cliff while his father, in a stout bathing costume, runs into the sea. "An arm came up and waved, though as if it were uncertain of its direction." Col, to behave, at last, in a suitably free manner - waves back. It is then he realizes that his father is not waving but drowning.

"Poor Col", Rose says, before this happens, "everything gets so confused up inside you." This kind of banal explicitness - scorned in the story, which is very sparing of dialogue - is the play's least satisfactory feature.

The point about the onset of childhood is in Col's laboured: until it becomes tedious. It was perfectly plausible and effective in the course of the narrative, to have the boy think despairingly about the badness

within him; what you cannot do is get these words spoken with any degree of naturalness. Marcus d'Amico (who plays Col with the kind of obtrusive restraint that hints at subdued disquiet) very properly hesitates before coming out with the awkward expression; it isn't his fault if it sounds coy and stilted. Billie Whitelaw, too - a wisp and well-meaning Rose - has some lush lines of her own which she delivers with as much aplomb as she can muster. "My dear - my dear boy - my boy." "I want you to be so happy", she tells her son; would anyone really say it? It's at moments like these that we wonder what happened to the attergency and ambiguity of "The Badness Within Him".

They've been sacrificed, of course, in the interests of straightforwardness and romantic feeling, just as the story's economy has given way to richness. Television drama is getting more and more decorative; this recreation of a "bygone period" is the prettiest I have seen. The details are delightful - the cotton print dresses, the rust-tipped Norfolk jackets, the old black bicycle leaning against a whitewashed wall of the village shop, the gaudy covers of the Strand magazine spread over the living-room table, the potted rubber-plant by the pre-war radio. Jess at one point is shown reading a Cassella schoolgirl story - *Schoolgirl's Rival*. I think, by Brenda Page (not looking quite as in 1932 or thereabouts). All the set-pieces are beautifully assembled. In rehearsal, the solemn pre-funeral procession in the driving rain, Susan Hill, who made a success of the first version, has made the most of an opportunity to write the same story twice.

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world that, although on one occasion Flatty is actually younger than she was on his previous visit, otherwise she gets much older each time around. At the end of the story Tom meets Mrs Bartholomew, the recluse landlady who lives in the flat at the top of the house, and discovers that she, in fact, is the Flatty with whom he has played each night of his stay.

Metaphysically, Tom's *Midnight Garden* is an exploration of the reality of time. But there is more to it than that. Purity, it is an exploration of what attitudes are appropriate to one's life. Is one's life as ephemeral as water poured out on the sand? Or is it substantial and permanent, something to which one can return, perhaps with others, as one might move about in a multi-chambered cinema that reruns "oldies"?

And what should be one's attitude towards people much older, or much younger, than oneself? We tend to see ourselves and others as though we and they were essentially young, or essentially middle-aged, or essentially old - as if Grandma had gone

through life as an eighty-two-year-old. But suppose that we, like Tom, could visit Grandma's childhood. What attitudes might we have to her then? We might come to think of the relations our life histories bear to those of others about us as accidents of birth; we might be encouraged to explore the possibilities of real friendship across large differences of age.

So in reading poems and stories, including children's poems and stories, we dwell in possibility. Learning how to do that, freely and securely, is as important a part of growing up as learning to form adequate concepts, the accomplishment Piaget and other developmental psychologists have concentrated on. Dwelling reflectively in possibility helps us to get clearer about the concepts we have already formed and about which our attitudes towards persons, places and things, even towards life itself, are well placed. Such reflectiveness is, I think, essentially philosophical; yet it is entirely natural to many non-philosophers and especially to many young children.

Ghostly forms

By Elaine Moss

DIANA WYNNE JONES:
The Time of the Ghost
Macmillan. £4.95.
0 333 32012 3

VIVIEN ALCOCK:
The Stane Walkers
Methuen. £4.95.
0 416 20700 6

Diana Wynne Jones is a prolific novelist of enormous range who can raise hairs on the back of the neck one minute, belly laugh the next. A certain untidiness and self-indulgent prolixity have characterized many of her novels to date, especially the group set in an imaginary medieval period. But she also writes about modern children, witty, alive, articulate, often neglected, always resilient: they need to be resilient if they are to cope with the emanations of the paranormal that threaten their lives.

Diana Wynne Jones's new novel, *The Time of the Ghost*, is one of her modern stories. The title is instantly forgettable one may think as one picks up this book but as, three hours later and in a state of bewildered admiration one lays it down again, realization dawns: the title pinpoints the theme exactly. Mrs Wynne Jones is skilfully exploring time - and the ghost.

In the conventional literary ghost

story it is the ghost of past happenings that rises, walks, haunts the present demanding retribution. Diana Wynne Jones flies this convention: for here it is from the present that a ghost returns to a period seven years past, desperate to avert a catastrophe in its own "now".

To explain, or to try to explain: the ghost that hovers unhappily among the three Melford sisters in their joyless rooms in a boys' boarding school is a lost memory, yellowish, amorphous with a voice trying always to break through. It is urgently seeking to recover its identity; is it Sally the fourth (absent) sister, and if so, why isn't it embodied? For the ghost knows Sally is not yet dead. But is a Sally-in-the-future in danger? The body of a young woman lying unconscious in a hospital bed after an accident could be that Sally of the future. The accident might have been connected with the Melfords' black magic practices (in which the boys from the school had joined), Monigan, the greedy spirit who has raised, may finally be claiming the life of one of the Melfords, seven years hence. The ghost / lost memory of the young woman in the hospital bed must somehow intervene in the past to divert Monigan's curse.

Not since K. M. Briggs, that great folklorist and author of *Kate Cracker*, has the supernatural been so firmly and convincingly handled. But here the horror of dealing with evil spirits, the blood rites, the elemental disturbances lie cheek-by-jowl with a richly humorous story in which three schoolgirls, determined to catch the

Their stiff fingers poked and pried, caught at her shirt and raked through her hair. One statue, pulling some strands out by the roots, held its hand up in the moonlight, the fine shinning hairs caught in its stiff fingers, stirring slightly in the wind. It seemed bemused by something so delicate and soft, and fingered its own grim, immobile curls as if dissatisfied.

Vivien Alcock's second novel confirms her as a new writer who can command plot, character, nuance and dialogue with a precision and sensitivity that sets her firmly among the elite of English fantasy authors for the young.

Extensions of reality

By Ann Evans

CATHERINE SEFTON:

Emer's Ghost
Hamish Hamilton. £4.95.
0 241 10619 2

RUTH PARK:
Playing Beatie Bow
Kestrel. £5.50.
0 7226 5771 4

To build a story for ten to twelve-year-olds around the supernatural is to court disaster; the successful ghost story for this age group is such a rarity that to find two at one sitting is a bonanza. Catherine Sefton, experienced now in this field, and Ruth Park, an Australian award-winner, share the honours almost equally: while one book may excel in artistry, the other quickly catches up in warmth and readability.

Emer's Ghost is set in the author's own country - the borders of Eire and Northern Ireland, beneath the blue shadow of the Mountains of Mourne - and the story focusses on a small village community with its legend of a lost chalice, hidden from Cromwell's marauders and never recovered. To Emer, living in the present-day village with her mother and sisters, comes the ghost of the long dead girl and the realization that she, Emer, and she alone, can lay bare the mystery of the chalice. Her final ordeal, in which her own life and that of her closest sister are at risk, is a true test of her courage and selflessness; it is also a piece of writing which for sheer economy of style and intensity of drama would be hard to equal. There is about the whole of *Emer's Ghost* a beautiful, wrought sense of timelessness, reminiscent of *The Stone Book Quartet*. Catherine Sefton shares with Alan Garner a gift for rooting a plot so deeply in its setting that even the supernatural is a totally acceptable extension of reality, rather than some clever, superimposed trick. Add to this an uncanny insight into the workings of a child's mind, an acute ear for dialogue and an eye for the odd idiosyncrasy which stamps a character indelibly on the reader's mind, and you have a writer of a rare order. This latest book may not make box office history but it should be remembered for its sheer quality.

The ghost in *Playing Beatie Bow* is

its heroine, Abigail Park. Against the disturbing background of her parents' broken marriage there moves an ingenious plot in which the four-year-old schoolgirl is spirited back to the Sydney of a hundred years ago; there she is required to live in the home of young Beatie Bow, who subsequently gave her name to the playground game in Abigail's school. Beatie's grandmother recognizes in Abigail the Stranger who alone can perpetuate their family gift of clairvoyance. How she achieves this is turned into a story of suspense and excitement, rich in humanity, shrewd observation and wit. Abigail herself is a character in the Dido Twite tradition: tender-hearted despite an aslring tongue, vulnerable behind a tough exterior, she has the courage of ten and a breezy optimism to go with it. As the pivot of the plot, she is the book's chief delight, followed closely by the marvellously Dickensian portrait of the Victorian family with whom she has to live. An expert and richly deserved popularity it will surely have with ten to twelve-year-old girls.

The family circle

By Gillian Cross

JOAN LINGARD:
Strangers in the House
Hamish Hamilton. £4.95.
0 241 10671 0

Life has grown harder for children in books. Once there were "family stories" about the jolly adventures of middle-class children home for the hols. It was a cliché, but a comfortable one. Today's cliché is the re-marriage of single parents which flings their children together without warning. Like all clichés, this is potentially powerful. The sudden intrusion of new and resented members into the family circle highlights differences and generates strong emotions. The growth of the hybrid family is complex, requiring adaptation and understanding from everyone. But such complexity demands skilful development, especially if, as in *Strangers in the House*, it is the book's main subject.

Strangers in the House begins promisingly, opposing two dissimilar teenage characters, Calum, the silent, lonely boy, devoted to his sheepdog, and Stella, the volatile town girl, furious at having to share her room with Calum's sister, Betsy. There are a few interesting differences, too, between the newly married parents. Willa, Calum's mother, is cautious and thrifty. Tom, Stella's father, is a happy-go-lucky journalist. They have little money and a tiny flat; but none of this is explored in depth. Instead, there is a proliferation of incidents, trivialized by lack of suspense: Calum's dog is killed; Betsy

The Henty Society, which exists to circulate ideas and information about G. A. Henty, the author of boys' adventure stories, has just entered its fifth year of existence. In addition to its quarterly *Bulletin*, which contains articles about Henty and other nineteenth-century authors, it also publishes a bibliography of Henty's works for collectors and historians of Victorian children's fiction. Further details of the Society can be obtained from the Secretary, Roy Henty, 60 Painswick Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.

Confrontations

By Nicholas Tucker

STEVE BOWLES:

Jamie
Gollancz. £4.95.
0 575 03015 1

ANNE FINE:
Round Behind the Ice House
Methuen. £4.95.
0 416 20820 7

Neither of these two well-written novels for older children quite works, but both are original and challenging, and even with their flaws more interesting than the snafu orthodoxy of less ambitious writers.

Jamie, by Steve Bowles, concerns eight mini-adventures in the life of a young teenager, but the jocular chapter headings for each give no idea of the closely realistic way in which events are described. In the first episode, for example, Jamie's school bag goes over the garden wall by mistake, only to be followed by the daunting sound of breaking glass. But this immemorial scene from so many past children's books is not treated here as anything particularly comic. Jamie has to get his bag back from the injured party - an angry, grey-haired lady now minus a cucumber frame, who also points out "I suppose you think old people have got money to throw away." She, in her turn, wants a confrontation with Jamie's quick-tempered mother, but to avoid this Jamie finally manages to catch the bag back, avoiding trouble with the police and with his own conscience in the process.

And so it goes on with other adventures involving stolen goods (Jamie's parents acting as willing accessories), an accident that leaves Jamie with a partially paralysed arm plus the loss of a best friend, a vicious beating-up on a rubbish dump, and even a modest, though memorable, first encounter with sex. All this is vivid and authentic enough, but the author's unwillingness to engage with his characters, neither morally nor in any other way, finally robs this novel of its other-

wise deserved impact, with detachment in the narration finally leading to similar feelings in the reader. (The actual writing, too, sometimes varies curiously between adult and childish ways of putting things, with sentences such as "It would spoil their holiday if he got himself beat up.") But parts of *Jamie* still remain very good indeed, and Steve Bowles is certainly an author to keep an eye on. Throw away the book's cover, though, with its glossy photograph of a boy holding an aerosol can with which he has apparently just written the book's name on an adjacent wall. Readers should be allowed to imagine such a freshly observed hero for themselves, and who, these days, would want to do anything that seems to approve, however reluctantly, of this dreary type of urban vandalism?

Anne Fine's *Round Behind the Icehouse*, in contrast, is set deep in the countryside, and describes the relationship between a pair of adolescent twins. But once again, there is no sense of false romance: the farm is seen as an impersonal, sometimes cruel place, with the twins themselves caught up with each other in a destructive confusion of affection and resentment. All this is outlined well and convincingly; disquiet sets in, though, when the use of the first person singular is taken to such an extent that the "I" of the narrator begins to appear on each page with the monotony of telegraph poles seen from a train window. Certainly, adolescents frequently do think and write like this, but self-absorption does not always attract interest from others, and there are moments when Tom - the omnipresent ego - goes on too much for his, or our, own good. Yet there are passages of genuine power and feeling in this novel, and it is nice to see the twin relationship stripped, for a change, of its immediate glamour and shown as something altogether more complex and sometimes even damaging. There are distinct rewards here for readers who persevere with this occasionally disjointed and highly emotional narrative, and Anne Fine too is clearly a good novelist who should go on to write even better books.

Orphan lives

By Jennifer Moody

CATHERINE STORR:

Vicky
Faber. £4.95.
0 571 11762 7

MARA KAY:
Lolo
Macmillan. £4.95.
0 333 31732 7

The two heroines of the novels under review, are girls who, by reason of adoption or illegitimacy, do not quite belong where they find themselves. Lacking the security of a normal family life, they look on from the outside like Dickensian orphans, noes to the window panes.

In *Vicky*, Catherine Storr has examined tenderly and sensitively the complex emotions of an adopted daughter. Vicky has always known that she was adopted at birth after her mother died in hospital. At the death of her loved and loving adoptive mother, the occasional murmurings of concern over her real heritage become pressing. There are few clues; but with the help of a policeman friend, a smudged photograph and a delicately knifed shawl, she tracks down a teacher and confidante of her mother, who is indeed probably her own unknown father's mother. Ma Storr has over the years written a distinguished series of books for the younger reader, many exploring the nature of girls on the brink of growing up, hesitant, unsure, apprehensive. *Vicky* is I think the best of them all; the author deals with the ambivalence of her heroine's position, her need to know about herself and her concern not to hurt those who love her, with honesty and delicacy, and has surrounded the central figure with a

range of totally credible, three-dimensional characters, each of whom could well stand alone as a subject for future work. Altogether a book of great maturity and insight.

In *Lolo* Mara Kay has returned again to that period of history which she evokes for the reader with elegance and clarity: nineteenth-century and pre-Revolutionary Russia. Lolo is the natural daughter of one of the great Russian poets, Feodor Ivanovich Tyutchev. Her mother has had a long standing union with Lolo's father, who has however a legal wife with whom he spends most of his time. Because of the irregular nature of her parents' relationship, Lolo is denied time and again the chance to live a social life of any normality. She makes friends, receives invitations, only to have them removed when those inviting her become aware of her equivocal status. The family moves from flat to flat, living sometimes abroad, sometimes in Saint Petersburg; Tyutchev calls occasionally, ignores Lolo's younger brothers, receives reproaches from Lolo's mother. Only when she is placed in Madame Trubba's school does the poor child know anything like contentment; even that is removed when a meddling parent declares that Lolo's father cannot have provided for her and that the child must learn a demanding trade to support herself. Lolo runs home, catches consumption and dies, as her mother already has and as her younger brother is soon to do.

Ms Kay writes with conviction and erudition. There is no problem for the reader in feeling how inevitable it is that Lolo should be treated in this way; there is no problem in seeing just how delightful life would be if she were accepted fully. It is a pathetic tale, with a tear-jerking end; Ms Kay can congratulate herself on having re-created a truly believable person.

Revelations

By Cara Chanteau

KATHERINE PATERSON:

Jacob Have I Loved
Gollancz. £4.95.
0 575 02961 7

MARY TREADGOLD:
Journey From the Heron
Cape. £4.95.
0 224 01970 8

Jacob Have I Loved, which has won Katherine Paterson her second Newbery Medal is, as indicated by the title, a saga of sibling rivalry. The story is set during the Second World War, on the lonely island of Rass where life is ruled by the sea, and morals by Methodist principles. Wheeze, or Snmh Louise as she prefers to be known, grows up in the shadow cast by her younger twin Camline - a gifted singer, popular, beautiful, inevitably golden-haired. Poor Wheeze is driven ever further into the unreasonable resentment and vehement sense of injustice to which those of thirteen plus are prone. Indeed, there is sometimes the impression that the war itself (in its rare appearances) is an additional act

of malice personally directed against her.

Only when Caroline leaves the island to seek her fortune, does Louise arrive at a recognition of love and acceptance, working as a water-nymph with her father. But by then, she realizes that she too must find her own place in the world. Her real moment of revelation comes when, as a midwife delivering twins, she finds herself striving to save the frail child (her sister), and almost neglecting the stronger (herself). To some readers this will look like "knowing the place for the first time" but to others it may seem merely coming full circle. Perhaps the best clue to this book lies in the dedication: "I wish it were Emma . . .". *Jacob Have I Loved* emulates the same sense of discomfiture, but does not share Emma's elegance and poise.

More closely linked to the effects of war - this time the First World War - is Mary Treadgold's *Journey From the Heron*. Although Betsy Barrow, the heroine, is thirteen the book is not so feverishly about the problems of growing up. Despite the distant thunder of guns from across the Channel, Betsy's world is essentially secure: governed by the rules

of sentiment and just deserts.

The novel chronicles an eventful week spent in London when Betsy leaves the familiar surroundings of the Heron, an old Sussex house turned military hospital, to make way for three VADs. In wartime London with its raids, wounded Tommies and gin grannies "a bit upsy-woo at closing time", Betsy stays with her great Auntie Da who sells the rich's cast-off clothes to keep herself and her invalid grandson, Tom. Betsy meets and befriends Linda a plucky crippled girl, and Johnny Bridgehouse whose German father is at the Front fighting for the "Enemy". In the typical and satisfying way of a children's story, Betsy and Linda get involved in a slightly improbable adventure and save the day for the adults. The villains in this tale are not the Germans, but two Irish half-brothers whose involvement in espionage is just a natural extension of their malevolence. The Germans in the form they generally appear - prisoners of war, law-abiding expatriates mistreated by a vicious society - emerge as the victims. Although a more naive book than *Jacob Have I Loved*, *Journey From the Heron* possesses an innocence and occasional moral depth belied by its simple form.

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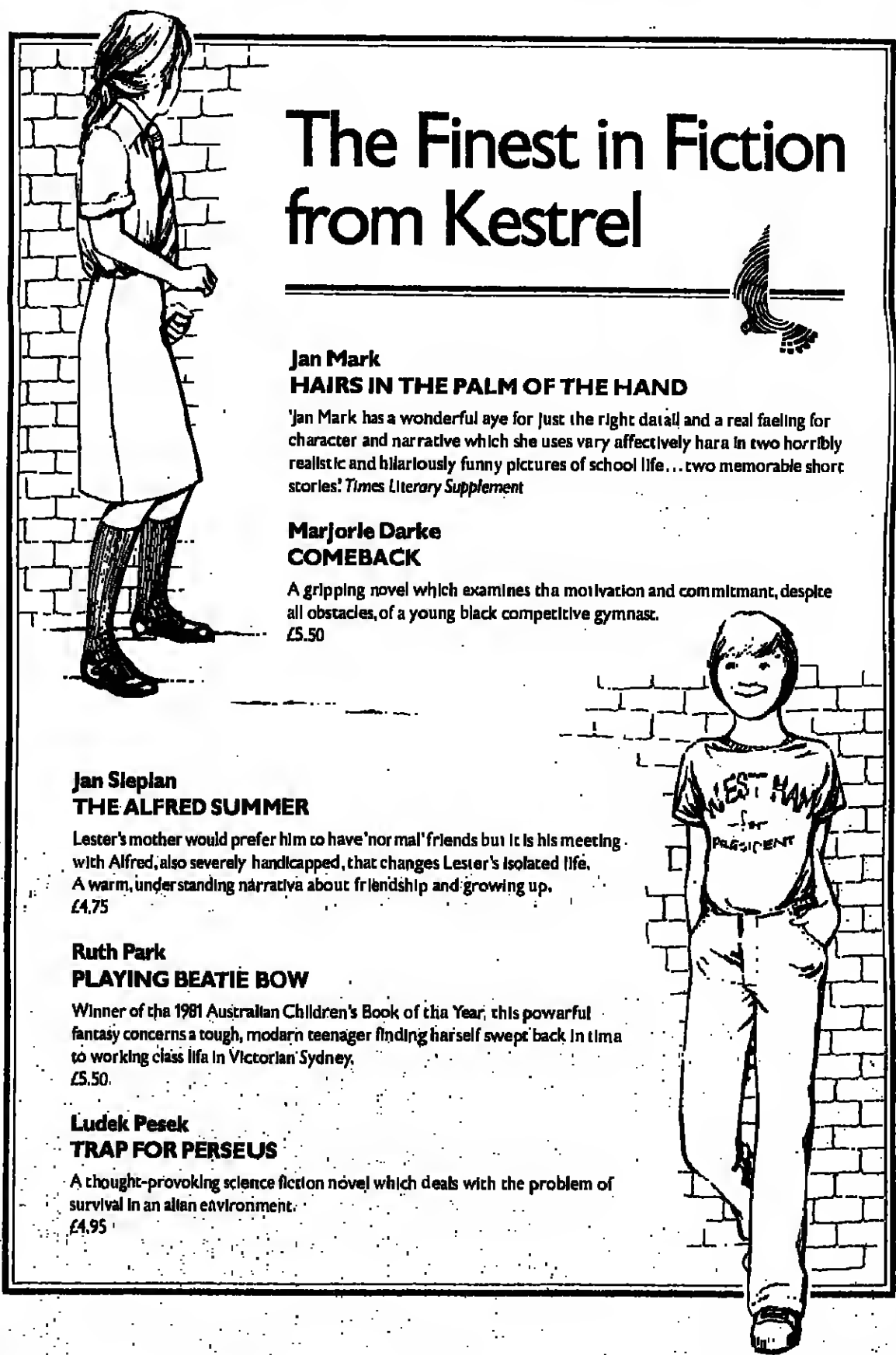
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Gold fever

By Ann Thwaite

IVAN SOUTHALL:
The Golden Goose
Methuen, £5.50.
0 416 21360 X

Ivan Southall has never cared a great deal about what people think of him, neither his child readers nor his reviewers. "The reader must come to me. I cannot go to the reader," he once wrote, and he has referred to "the haberdashery of the mind" through which his books must make their way. So we should not be surprised, at a time when we are told on every hand that children don't read historical novels, that Southall in his new trilogy has turned to writing about the past. *King of the Sinks* (1979) started the story of thirteen-year-old Custard living on a remote homestead in Australia in the 1850s. It's an elusive, difficult book with

something of the quality of a fable and a self-conscious, highly wrought style, more fanciful than Mark Twain's but with some of the humour and richness of *Huckleberry Finn*.

They are a strange lot, Custard's family and Preacher Tom and his sons. "No one that Custard knew was not slightly mad at best." At the end of the first book, the boy is captured by the Preacher's sons, because they have heard of his gifts of divination. The "sinks" find not only water for him but also gold, and a madness comes over a man at the thought of "gorgeous gold".

The publishers have decked out *The Golden Goose* in a glittering cover but, as we know, all that glitters is not gold. And the novel, though it stands on its own well enough, and is indeed more accessible than the first part, is rather a disappointment. Southall is a brave writer, never afraid to try something new, but for all their eccentricities the characters are mere puppets. The

style gets between us and them so that we find it difficult to care what happens to them as they rush west on the search for gold. We should sympathize with Custard. There is always some fellow expecting me to make him rich and I ain't even got a pair of socks. But we are often as fascinated as Custard himself.

Even the narrative is submerged in the style, in the repetitions and antitheses, so that it is sometimes quite difficult to know exactly what is going on. There is, however, one splendid scene when Custard's mother, the redoubtable Rebecca (who once shot off the hand of a persistent wooer) comes riding to Custard's rescue, flanked by the Law's troopers, but not forgetting to correct the boy's grammar.

It seems to me, though of course it will not seem so to Southall himself, that it is he, not his reviewer, who is putting up the "haberdashery of the mind". It is hard work getting through, but some may well think the journey worth making.

Various voices

By Edward Blishen

SARA AND STEPHEN CORRIN:
The Faber Book of Modern Fairy Tales
Faber £5.95.
0 571 11768 6

The first thing to say is that here are fifteen well-chosen stories: and that would be of no interest at all to its young readers, is how, having been assembled because they have done much the same thing, the authors demonstrate their differences. For a statement of the compilers' aims we have to rely on the hubbub in the dustjacket, there being no preface. It was to gather original stories written during the last hundred years, "all entirely characteristic of their authors", and yet all having "something of the traditional fairy tale". One might expect pastiche – the debt glaring. In fact, it's the one or two stories that do here and there seem to exploit the generalized air of fairy tale – being merely wonderful – that are the least successful. The rest bring their authors' special qualities to bear on magical narratives. They didn't set out to write fairy tales, but to write a story by Laurence Houseman, Helen Cresswell, Joan Aiken, and so on.

So in Thurber's splendid tale, "The Great Quillow", there's all his love of verbal oddities, his ironical feeling for the impotence of the large when faced with the cunning of the small. In Eleanor Farjeon's "The Clumber Pup", the dialogue has the rhythms and repetition characteristic of the traditional tale, but also that texture of honest reality that appears

in everything she wrote. F. Anstey approaches his story "The Good Little Girl" from a most dangerous angle: he is using the conventions of the fairy tale for satirical purposes. The tale, on which his own is a comic gloss, is the one about the child rewarded for her virtue with the gift of spilling precious stones out of her mouth when she speaks. This happens to priggish Frisella; and she's courted and haunted for that reason by her avaricious Aunt Margarine. But a visit to the jeweller's with the gems, eagerly collected by Aunt Margarine's entire family, ends appallingly: the stones are found to be false. One remembers that Anstey hung the most famous of his stories on a wry perception of what the traditional opportunities of the fairy tale might lead to – and especially the handling of precious or semi-precious stones – if slightly misplaced in setting or timing.

And then there are the writers who, one feels, would have been among coiners of the original fairy tales, if history had allowed it. Even so, Philipp Pearce's "The Squirrel Wife" has the note of severe tenderness typical of her; and Walter de la Mare's "The Lord Fish" the magical particularity of place and time that haunts and holds together all he wrote, whether supposedly modern in setting or supposedly timeless. The only serious quarrel I have with Jan Strangely, who did the drawings here, is that her imprisoned lady's face in "The Lord Fish" – an "odd small face", as de la Mare said in some form of words or another about almost all the beloved women's faces in his poetry or his prose – is not quite odd and small enough.

The book begins with what is arguably the most truly modern fairy tale ever written: Ted Hughes's "The Iron Man". For some reason only three of the five chapters of this remarkable story are printed. It's like lopping off the last two acts of *Hamlet*. But I guess few readers will rest until they've run down the thing complete.

Neugebauer Press Publishing Ltd, London and Alphabet Press, Boston have recently published an edition of *Fables de La Fontaine*. The book is produced as a facsimile of the original vellum manuscript which has fascinating illuminations by Marie Angel. *Fables de La Fontaine* contains the French text of seventeen of the best known fables and it is

accompanied by an English rhyming version of the tales by Sir Edward Marsh ("One fault from which the poet is free: he's making loans too readily") which was first published in 1954 and which will be familiar to many. The book and the translation, which is done separately, are sold together in a slip-case (0 90723410 0) and priced at £15.

Tendencies to wildness

By Alan Brownjohn

MARGARET MAHY:
Raging Robots and Unruly Uncles
Illustrated by Peter Stevenson
Dent, £3.95.
0 460 06073 2

ROBERT NYE:
Harry Pay the Pirate
Hamish Hamilton, £4.95.
0 241 10672 9

JONATHAN GATHORNE-HARDY:
Cyril Bonhamy v Madam Big
Illustrated by Quentin Blake
Cape, £4.50.
0 224 01991 0

There is no shortage of moderately original fantasy in almost any new crop of stories for children. But what often causes one story to stand out above others is a particular kind of adroitness and selectivity in handling detail – discretion must hold tendencies to wildness in check – and a special dimension of intelligence. Margaret Mahy's *Raging Robots and Unruly Uncles* has, superficially, a look of decidedly heavy-handed exuberance. Yet appearances deceive. This little tale marshals its array of zany incidents and odd characters with absorbing skill, and offers a moral fable of exceptional ingenuity and wit.

Uncle Jasper strives in vain to bring up his seven sons (Caligula, Nero, Genghis, Tarquin, etc) in villainy; and the good Uncle Julian despairs of ever making his one daughter, the exemplary Prudence, quite virtuous enough. To create an especially subtle kind of havoc, the lads devise a perfect walking and talking doll which will outdo Prudence in goodness, and send it to

Uncle Julian. Prudence (she is very good at electronics) constructs in turn a thieving and destructive robot which will outstrip Uncle Jasper and the boys in wickedness. Both households find Frankenstein in their midst. The moral is that either good or evil, taken to their absolute extremes, become impossible to perform, and also tedious; though there still has to be, in Uncle Jasper's words, "the dark and the light that keep the balance of the world between them".

In the end, of course, an ingenious happiness is contrived, with all the children tamed into useful (though wonderfully odd citizens, the robots given vocations of their own, and the uncles brought to recognize their own excesses. Margaret Mahy has compressed her intricate and eventful plot into an even smaller space than seems possible, since Peter Stevenson's broadly (and successfully) humorous illustrations must take up about one-third of the book. She runs through an extraordinary range of weird happenings, and yet lapses into scarcely a syllable of over-used material or facile obviousness. Her prose is both elegant and racy; and this brief, hilarious book offers many moments of the purest delight.

All the suitable ingredients appear to be there in *Harry Pay the Pirate*, and yet the mixture disappointingly fails to rise. Robert Nye gives promise of some straight, unpretentious, even frankly traditional tale-telling in his early pages: Harry dreams of being a pirate, meeting a strange flute-playing black man, and falling in love with the King of Spain's daughter. This could be a conventional tale of the pursuit of one heart's desire, with the addition of the sweep and colour of this author's best work in prose and poetry. And yet it reads thinly. The nebulous Mr

Shadaw, a *deus ex machina* who accompanies every voyage of Harry's pirate ship, the *Miss Rebecca*, is much too heavily symbolic to fit into the story comfortably. Only one of Harry's matey pirate crew, the peg-legged Woody Sam, is developed as a rounded character. The well-prepared surprises in the plotting evaporate strangely when the secret is out, the climaxes in the action lack genuine excitement. Robert Nye could not write dully, but fairy tales of this sort require a luminosity and a sureness of touch which *Harry Pay the Pirate* lacks.

Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's Cyril belongs to the breed of lovably lazy heroes who win through far more by accident than design. Readers may enjoy a writer hero who is penniless, yet will do anything to avoid work, and is good at little else beside books; though writers themselves may wonder if Gathorne-Hardy is not letting the side down? Cyril's desperate attempts to fail in his employment as a Father Christmas in a department store – attacking children, distributing too many presents, reading or dozing in the Wendy House – are told with brisk cheerfulness; and Cyril stumbles accidentally on a vast plot to infiltrate stores up and down the country with hundreds of burglars in similar garb. *Cyril Bonhamy v Madam Big* (the latter is the monstrous criminal behind the whole affair, though she enters the tale too late to seem particularly vivid or horrendous) is a fast and uncomplicated fantasy with a vigorous vein of humour. But its stock of invention is no greater than the elaboration of one simple idea. It is entertaining in an expected vein; yet the literary police commissioner who writes florid letters to Mrs Bonhamy may seem funnier to some than the SAS men who burst in on the crooks in Santa Claus disguises.

Endings as beginnings

By Dominic Hibberd

ALISON MORGAN:
Paul's Kite
Chatto and Windus, £4.95.
0 7011 2594 2

SMITH FRENCH:
Cannily, Cannily
Angus and Robertson £3.25.
0 207 14432 X

Paul's Kite is a conventional book but a good one. As usual in this particular convention, the hero is a tough, independent eleven-year-old, with a feckless mother, a missing father and relations who care more than they seem to. There is the familiar contrast between urban and rural values, the pet girl cousin who turns out to be a brick, the sinistral uncle who's actually an embezzler, the benevolent old men who appear from nowhere just when they're wanted – and so on. But all this is

handled with freshness and insight. Paul moving within a pattern of adult relationships and London streets which he sees with a child's acute but only half-perceiving eye. Alison Morgan, writing now with justified confidence, does not feel obliged to explain everything. We can see for ourselves the strategy and Mr Abraham uses to persuade Paul to go home after a day of disasters. We also sense that the old man is a wizard, just as the delightfully unexpected old lady who helps Paul with his symbolic kite is undoubtedly a fairy – and this indicates the real convention in which the book is written. Not that the supernatural is ever referred to. What is referred to, though, is Paul's earlier life in Wales, actually the subject of an earlier book (*Leaving Home*), a misty dimension beyond the present London volume. One looks twice at the cover before noticing that behind the tall buildings of Bayswater there rises a cloudy Welsh mountain, but the surest kite sees both places and looks further still to the third book (for there will be one, surely), in

which Paul's father will come back from America to find his son at last. The story pauses but does not finish; as the old lady says, "Beginnings are better than endings". *Cannily, Cannily* (not the best of titles) is about yet another tough etc. who finds his feet (they always do). This "kid" does it by playing football in Australia. For an adult British reader, the most interesting thing in the book is its portrait of Australian provincial life, with its combination of strangeness and familiarity. Trevor lives in a caravan with his roving parents, who are intelligent 1960s drop-outs; his author belongs to the 1970s and so sympathizes with Trevor's predicament. The boy needs a home, since he belongs neither to the rigidly conformist town nor to the rootless culture of his parents. But Simon French could do with some more practice; he achieves his effects rather crudely and does not complete his value-testing. The family suddenly leaves the town for a house which they happen to own somewhere. That's too easy an ending to be convincing as a beginning.

Give some animal magic this Christmas...

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give Dent books

DENT 53 Welbeck Street, London W1

The Fiddler's Son

Translated from an anonymous German ballad

When I was a little lad
I lay within the cradle,
But through the living street I strolled
As soon as I was able.

There I met the King's young daughter,
She, too, walked the street.
'Come in, come in, little son of a fiddler,
Play me a tune sweet.'

It lasted scarcely a quarter of an hour.
The King had saw me sing.
'You rogue, you thief, what is that song
That to my child you're bringing?
In France there is a yellow bull
Whereon you'll soon be swinging.'

In but the space of three short days
I had to climb the ladder.
'Oh give to me my fiddle to play,
For I'll not play hereafter.'

Then bowed I to, then bowed I fro,
On all the four strings taling.
A fine death lament played I,
And the King's tears were falling.

'My daughter is yours, little fiddler's son,
So to your bride come down.
In Austria is a castle built
And you shall wear the crown.'

Charles Causley

Familiar faces

By Judith Elkin

BEVERLY CLEARY:
Ramona Quinby, Age 8
Hamish Hamilton, £4.95.
0 241 10665 6

TOM TULLY:
Laak Out... It's Little Ed
Wame, £3.95.
0 7232 2767 5

Arguments about the popularity of pulp writing for children, often stress the element of security to be found in the familiarity, predictability and repetitiveness of a series, where young children are able to identify easily with the same characters from one book to another.

The Ramona books also offer just this formula but in a much superior and very amusing fashion. Ramona Quinby made her first appearance here in 1974 in *Ramona the Pest*, as a personable, purposeful and often misunderstood six year old. Successful books have proved her to be a lasting character, with a great appeal to young children, either those just learning to read competently or for those looking back with wry amusement to their earlier childhood. The early reader is helped greatly by the large, clear, well-lead type and plentiful illustrations.

In *Ramona Quinby, Age 8*, Beverly Cleary continues to demonstrate the clear understanding of young children's fears and concerns which she has shown in earlier titles, while maintaining a lighthearted yet perceptive approach to Ramona, her family and friends. Ramona is starting a new school, in the third grade, and attempting to make her presence felt. She is the sort of child who courts disaster and there are a number of very funny incidents to fit in with her comic strip approach to the stories. But the overall effect is unrelievedly boring – pink, cyan, green, pink – even though the prater might be to blame for some of the plainer excesses of *Aargh!*.

Each book is a dressing-up tale with a basic story line and language which is on the whole imaginative

stories from one book to another but many children will enjoy the feeling of having lived through similar events with Ramona before.

Laak Out... It's Little Ed is also one of a series about the same main character, a rather abnoxious child who is editor of his school magazine. But, in contrast to the Ramona books, the Little Ed books belong to some of the worst traditions of pulp writing. The tone of this latest title is infuriatingly patronizing, most of the incidents in the

book are unbelievably silly and the adults, particularly the school teachers, are made to look quite ridiculous. There is the Deputy Head of the school who is obsessed by the accuracy of the predictions in Little Ed's horoscope; the local newspaper reporter, who is fooled into believing that aliens from outer space are about to land in the area and a ridiculous bookshop owner and children's book writer who come to blows with Little Ed creates uproar at their Book Fair.

Playing safe

By Josephine Karavasil

RUSSELL HOBAN:
The Great Fruit Gum Robbery
0 416 05790 X
They Came From Aargh!
0 416 05840 X
Illustrated by Colin McNaughton
Methuen/Walker, £2.95 each.

Publishers seem to be playing safe at the moment and artists are spreading their work around in order to survive. Little books by big names, often not published by the artist's usual publisher, seem fashionable, and *The Great Fruit Gum Robbery* and *They Came From Aargh!* are in this group. Many artists understandably do better under certain editors than others and Colin McNaughton, with his illustrations for these two books, is a case in point. Whoever moulded him before, must have had the right touch and sense to have controlled his choice and depth of colour. Not so with the garish colours used here.

The artist may have been trying to use more popular colours to fit in with his comic strip approach to the stories. But the overall effect is unrelievedly boring – pink, cyan, green, pink – even though the prater might be to blame for some of the plainer excesses of *Aargh!*.

Each book is a dressing-up tale with a basic story line and language which is on the whole imaginative

and fun. In *Robbery*, the king of the desert keeps his fruit gums from the underwriter diver only to find that the baby nips off with them and eats them all. In *Aargh!*, the spaceship homes in on "the place of the chocolate cake", which the munosaurus calls earth, and takes off again, the cake eaten and the mission completed. Racy stories, you might think, with which a young reader could identify. Well, if you were male and white you might. There are no girls at all in these two books. In each of the books the adult female does nothing but cook for her three active boys. And the people are as white as white (though coloured very pink – see above). There might be a place for yet more dressing-up stories with not terribly original plots if they reflected something of our present society, but these two don't. The characters were kept white perhaps because the publisher had co-productions in mind. Certainly, the ugly, caricatured faces of the boys are reminiscent of a style of illustration that was popular in Germany three years ago.

This said, there are touches of magic in both the artwork and the stories – the Haath Robinsonesque spaceship made out of ordinary household things like dustbin lids and brooms and the comic strip boxes broken to give the effect of a diver under water and the "asymmetrical aback horror" fond of milk, purrs might tweak out the odd laugh.

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Matching the words

By Ann Martin

It is difficult to assess such a plethora of picture books. Usually the illustrations are excellent; but this superior artwork is, alas, often added to less than limpid prose; some publishers are too easily beguiled by pretty pictures into thinking any old words will do. This particularly seems to be the case with imports: a number of the poorer books come from Europe and one does wonder why they are brought here. While it is obviously difficult to balance encouragement for deserving newcomers with desirably high standards, surely now, when tales of publishing woes abound, it is time for a little more discrimination. That said, there are still many excellent books around, matching imaginative pictures with well-chosen words. Often, too, the illustrations are good enough to carry a poorer-quality text.

Leon Garfield is well known as a writer for older children; now he has extended his range to the six or seven year olds. *Fair's Fair*, a story of two waifs in Victorian London, who are rescued from the slums by a big black dog and who then prove to be "kind, brave, patient, honest and generous", as required by their benefactor, is written with his usual pungency, well-matched by the slightly grotesque pictures, with their Dickensian overtones. There is plenty of reading here, as there is in *Operation Hedgehog*, a gentle little book prettily illustrated in soft watercolours. Nobby loves hedgehogs and learns how to rescue them from the nearby cattle grid; an occasional use of dialect does not ring true but otherwise this is a nicely written story. *Fuu, too*, are the *Just How Stories*, written initially as a school project, and then illustrated: the result is a varied collection of considerable charm which should certainly appeal to other children.

With Rodney Peppé we are back with an expert and his latest book, *The Mice Who Lived in a Shoe*, is well up to a standard; this picture story of the mice who build themselves a house in a shoe, able to withstand heat, cold - and the cat - is simply written and properly embellished by the detailed pictures; older siblings will enjoy the humorous asides. Brian Wildsmith is another

favourite and *Bear's Adventure* is excellent. While two balloons picnic, a bear climbs into their basket for a snooze and is carried away to a structure of rapid and hilarious adventures. Easy for a small child to follow, the lavish use of colour in the graphic pictures ensures success. Nor should Gerald Rove need any introduction; in *How George Lost His Voice*, his latest hero is grumpy George, bellowing at all and sundry until he loses his voice; then everything begins to answer back. There is plenty of humour in the words and cartoon-like pictures. A newcomer in the same field is Bob Wilson, making an amusing beginning with *Stanley Bagshaw and the Fourteen-Foot Wheel*. Stanley, set to watch the bicycle wheel machine, falls asleep; it goes wrong, and he has chase the resulting wheel through the town. Told cartoon-strip fashion with a text reminiscent of Stanley Holloway's monologues, the book is great fun.

Three traditionally-derived stories have genuine charm. *The Gossipy Wife*, a simply written cautionary tale from Russia, is illustrated by Amanda Hall with a strong Russian flavour. The next *The Princess on the Hill* is a sequel to Hans Andersen's perfect princess. This princess sleeps soundly on a nut under ten mattresses and is sought by the prince who finds his mother too perfect. This German import is delightfully pictured as a Victorian fable, while the translation is slyly comic. From Switzerland comes *The Lonely Prince*, who is unhappy until he finds a friend; this well-written tale has plenty of colour.

Other imports are worth consideration. *The Snowman who went for a Walk* is from Germany, told in a trifle whimsically but accompanied by the detailed pictures small children love; the double-page spread of a traffic jam, every inch crowded with cars and people, is particularly good. Also from Germany is *Piro and the Fire Engine*, pleasantly told with bright, humorous illustrations. Humour is also foremost in *A Pet for Mrs Arbuckle*: the Australian heroine advertises for a pet and travels the world to inspect those who answer, ending up, however, with the neighbouring cat. From the same country comes a parody of the

battle of Trafalgar, *The Tale of Admiral Mouse*; the mice are delightfully painted and very engaging; it is rather coy but may well please some. *Only the Best* is from America; it is a glossy, well-illustrated little morality tale with a specifically Jewish setting which adds considerable interest to this description of a father's search for the perfect gift for his first-born son. Two other books deserve some consideration. *The Magic Bubble Trip* and *My Cat Kipper*, the first for its grotesque but engaging illustrations of a boy's escape from a high rise flat to a world of frogs, and the latter for a

reasonable story of a boy helped through measles by his new cat. Fantasy, as much as any other genre, needs its own mad logic; there is none in the next four books. In *House by Mouse* Doris Smith paints charmingly but needs better material. *Princess Kalina and the Hedgehog* evokes Stewelpeter, but what a dreadful plot! It is practically non-existent as is the case in both *The Mysterious Railway and Tunn* and *Why*. Why on earth did anyone bother with these? Two other British books are equally feeble in their fantasy: in both *The Impossible Day*

and *The Impossible Night* the text is simply an excuse for a random set of pictures.

But to end on a cheerful note, *Fabulous Beasts* does not really belong in the picture-book group; its appeal is far broader. A selection of mythical animals or dragons to such a rarely as the catoblepas from Egypt (busy tormenting a man from Egypt) and clearly coloured as the medieval illuminations they resemble, and the accompanying descriptions are anecdotal and delightful. This is a book to keep.

LEON GARFIELD: *Fair's Fair*. Illustrated by Margaret Chumley. Macdonald. £3.25. 0 354 08126 8

MARGARET LANE: *Operation Hedgehog*. Illustrated by Patricia Casey. Methuen/Walker. £3.95. 0 416 05920 1

JUST HOW STORIES. By Girls of Lady Eden's School, London. Illustrated by Derek Steel. Jonathan Cape. £4.50. 0 224 01713 6

RODNEY PEPPÉ: *The Mice Who Lived in a Shoe*. Kestrel. £4.25. 0 7226 5737 4

BRIAN WILDSMITH: *Bear's Adventure*. Oxford University Press. £4.50. 0 19 279757 3

GERALD ROSE: *How George Lost His Voice*. Bodley Head. £3.95. 0 370 304357

BOA WILSON: *Stanley Bagshaw and the Fourteen-Foot Wheel*. Hamish Hamilton. £4.50. 0 241 10634 6

The Gossipy Wife. Adapted from a Russian folk tale. Illustrated by Amanda Hall. Blackie. £4.95. 0 216 91092 7

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MICHELLE NIKLY: *The Princess on the Hill*. Illustrated by Jean Claverie. Faber. £3.95. 0 571 11846 1

MAX BOLLOER: *The Lonely Prince*. Translated by Lucy Meredith. Illustrated by Jörg Obris. Methuen. £3.95. 0 416 21590 4

MIRA LOBE: *The Snowman who went for a Walk*. Translated by Peter Carter. Illustrated by Winfried Oppenorth. Oxford University Press. £3.95. 0 19 279759 X

KURT BAUMANN: *Piro and the Fire Engine*. Translated by Marion Koenig. Illustrated by Jiri Bernard. Faber. £3.95. 571 11843 7

GWENOA SMYTH: *A Pet for Mrs Arbuckle*. Illustrated by Ann James. Hamish Hamilton. £4.24. 0 241 10543 9

MEGUILL ZOLA: *Only the Best*. Illustrated by Valerie Littlewood. Julia MacRae Books. £4.95. 0 8620 3047 1

BERNARD STONE: *The Tale of Admiral Mouse*. Illustrated by Tony Ross. Andersen Press. £3.50. 0 86264 009 1

INGRID AND DIETER SCHUBERT: *The Magic Bubble Trip*. Hutchinson. £3.95. 0 09 137780 3

STORIO BAUER: *My Cat Kipper*. Translated by U. Watson. Anderson Press. £3.95. 0 905478 90 8

JEANNETTE B. FLOI: *Princess Kalina and the Hedgehog*. Adapted by Frances Marshall. Illustrated by Dorothea Duntze. Faber. £1.50. 0 571 11844 5

GEORGE MENOZA: *House by Mouse*. Illustrated by Doris Smith. André Deutsch. £2.95. 0 233 97377 X

KOEN FOSSEY: *The Mysterious Railway*. Macdonald. £3.95. 0 354 08138 1

COLLETTE DEMEZ: *Toni and Tina in Topsy-turvy Town*. Illustrated by Marc-José Sacré. Wheaton. £3.95. 0 0827866 3

MARINA WARNER: *The Impossible Day* 0 416 05770 5, *The Impossible Night* 0 416 05850 7. Illustrated by Malcolm Livingstone. Methuen/Walker. £2.95 each.

ALISON LURIE: *Fabulous Beasts*. Illustrated by Monika Beiser. Jonathan Cape. £3.95. 0 224 01971 6

Gifts in season

By Brian Baumfield

Despite the commercials and the sentiment, Christmas remains a time of excitement and fun for children. Spending most of the year surrounded by slick offerings from television encompassing sex, violence and space age razzamattaz there is a curious comfort to be found in a return to the familiar traditional Santa beaming away in the bookshops. In the stories there can be little that is new or original, so it is in the presentation and packaging that publishers make their sales pitch. Teachers look for new ideas, parents look for presents. The delight of children lies in doing, singing, listening, playing, decorating and reading. This collection of Christmas material covers most of these activities, and the first batch consists of things to do. *Here Comes Christmas* is a novel stocking filler in the form of a cassette of poems, songs and carols, and an original story. It offers an appealing half hour and is good value. A new version of the ever popular cut-out books is *The Christmas Pageant* by Tomie de Paola. It contains the story of the Nativity in eight small pages of simple figures to be cut and coloured - at £1.25 it is both slight and expensive.

"Better value is a fun and games 'activity pack' called *Christmas is Coming*. Amongst its contents there is an advent calendar, "thank you" cards to make, games, decorations, puzzles, a novelty frieze complete with crib, and a record of songs and carols.

A piano book of easy to play carols *Play and Sing - It's Christmas*, sets out with the aid of easy diagrams and simplified notation to encourage children to play an accompaniment for the most popular carols. It is attractively illustrated, and the hinged spine (though not conducive to rough handling) enables it to stay flat when propped against the piano.

Follow the *Star* by Mala Powers is a glossy publication of stories and legends from all over the world, which takes the young reader through each

day of Advent and Christmas. Each story is preceded by a full page colour illustration having a stained glass window at the central motif. These are crude though undeniably colourful, and it is a pleasant change to find clear black printing of the text. Some of the tales are unusual, and the sources varied, but the total effect is rather cloying: suitable for girls of seven to nine.

The Christmas Book is a straightforward anthology of stories, puzzles, customs and practical jokes. It appears for the fourth year in revised form. The layout is admirably clear, the illustrations colourful if common-place. It is aimed at the seven to eleven age group.

The most complete book in this group - and indeed the most substantial in the whole collection is *The Oxford Christmas Book for Children* with an appeal for a rather older age group - it contains some original pieces, including an account by Dr Sheila Cassidy of her Christmas in a Chilean prison. Other distinguished contributors are Charles Causley, Roy Fuller, Anthony Thwaite and Keith Waterhouse. There is much fascinating background on such topics as Christmas cards, crackers and the yule log. There are many attractive illustrations, both in colour and black and white, although the book has a slightly old-fashioned air. It is rather like a pedigree version of the *Chronicle of Yesterday*. Nevertheless it is full of good things that owe nothing to fashion and which should give pleasure to all the family.

The remaining four books are primarily picture books for younger readers. *Lucy and Toni's Christmas* by Shirley Hughes is a slight account of the ritual of family Christmas and as such has a comforting air reflected in the cosy, uncluttered drawings of domestic contentment.

By contrast, the poem *The Night before Christmas* has been illustrated by Tomie de Paola in a precise and stylized form. Each page is bordered by patterns based on the quilts of New England. The formality of the pictures

goes well with the rhythmic pattern of the poem, which was written by Clement Moore in 1822. *How Brown Mouse kept Christmas* - by Clyde and Wendy Watson is a modest but pleasing little story, attractively illustrated for five to seven year olds. *A Day to Remember* has no real plot; it tells in pictures of a day in a town in Holland in the nineteenth century before the feast of Saint Nicholas as the children look forward and the people go about their business. The illustrations by Anton Pieck are quite enchanting with a true fairy tale quality. A delightful present for a book-collecting uncle.

There is a great demand for good quality books dealing with the theme of Christmas, and this collection will be welcomed by schools, nurseries, play groups and libraries - not to mention the children themselves.

Here Comes Christmas. Macdonald £2.75. 0 356 07541 9 (cassette) 0 356 07543 5 (pack).

TOMIE DE PAOLA: *The Christmas Pageant Cut-Out Book*. Methuen £1.25. 0 416 24500 5.

Christmas is Coming. Macdonald. £2.95. 0 356 07197 9 (record) 0 356 07559 0 (pack).

Play and Sing - It's Christmas. Collier Macmillan. £1.95. 0 02 04542 0.

MALA POWERS: *Follow the Star*. Hodder and Stoughton. £4.95. 0 340 26695 1.

The Christmas Book. Macdonald. £2.95. 0 356 05914 6.

ROBERT HUNT (Editor): *The Oxford Christmas Book for Children*. Oxford University Press. £5.95. 0 19 278104 9.

SIRLEY HUGHES: *Lucy and Toni's Christmas*. Gollancz. £3.95. 0 575 02970 6.

CLEMENT MOORE: *The Night Before Christmas*. Illustrated by Tomie de Paola. Oxford University Press. £3.95. 0 19 279758 1.

CLYDE AND WENDY WATSON: *How Brown Mouse kept Christmas*. Hamish Hamilton. £3.95. 0 241 10505 6.

BERNARD STONE: *A Day to Remember*. Illustrated by Anton Pieck. Ernest Benn. £3.95. 0 510 00113 0.

First encounters with literature

By Kicki Moxon Browne

Nursery rhymes are often a child's first encounter with literature. There must be hundreds of illustrated nursery rhymes on the market, and new ones appear all the time. *E. B. Blacksheep and Company* contains most of the standard nursery rhymes, and I found it both amusing and with a flavour of its own: "To market, to market" shows a pig in the passenger seat of a lorry, snugly resting his elbow on the open window, and "Three blind mice" are sugar mice on a cake, in the process of having their tails cut off with a carving knife. There are plenty of extra touches to ponder upon, such as the "illuminated" initial letters: the J in "Jack and Jill" is made up of a vinegar bottle and a strip of brown paper, and the P in "Polly put the kettle on" is a tea strainer standing on end. It seems a pity, though, that only about a third of the nursery rhymes in the book are illustrated. My young test consumers found it confusing to look at a picture of "Hedy diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle" at the same time as listening to "Old Mother Hubbard". It would have been better to illustrate them all, even if that meant including fewer rhymes.

This *Little Piggy* is entirely devoted to what must be the best known of all nursery rhymes. Veteran illustrator William Stobbs's paintings of a family of pigs in a country cottage are intriguingly contrasted with what appear to be photographs of oriental rugs in a collage effect, giving depth and richness to his new, delicate style. The little piggy that carried wee-wee-wee is not the usual character, but a free spirit bounding through the fields with his flute in a flurry of butterflies and musical notes. I particularly liked the cat which appears in most pictures, nonchalantly stalking every conceivable bit of wildlife.

Also by William Stobbs is the counting book *One saw, two eyes and a million stars*, for which the framework is a day in the life of a little girl and all the things she sees around her. The objects accumulate, so that everything which has already been counted appears again on subsequent pages: on the last double page spread we see one sun, two eyes, three butterflies and so on, right up to "20 dolls and a million stars". The book gently introduces the concept of "the same kind but not necessarily identical": for instance "15 sheep" consist of ten sheep in a pen plus five assorted sheep in the foreground. Counting books can

be tedious for the helping adults - but the objects in this book positively cry out to be counted.

Almost as well known as many nursery rhymes is *A Dark, Dark Tale*: "Once upon a time there was a dark, dark moor. On the moor there was a dark, dark wood" and so it goes on in an urgent *sonnet* voice right up to a surprise ending. Ruth Brown's illustrations are wonderfully spooky, laden with dust and cobwebs, and the book should go down very well with both older and younger children.

Donald Crews is one of the most exciting of children's book artists, and in *Light* he has produced yet another gem. There is a minimum of words, only labels such as "Lights in the country" or "Headlights/Tail-lights" and the visual impact is allowed to do its own work; a hundred words could not have evoked the stillness of the night as Crews does in his picture of moonlight.

Building a House has a similar sense of space and unhurriedness. We are shown, in bright primary colours and again in only a few words, every stage of building a house, from the arrival of the bulldozers to dig a hole in a green hill to the family moving in. It is a likeable book, chiefly because of the straightforward, unpatronizing approach. *Harry's Stripes* also presents facts in an appetizing form, but here, the approach seems less confident. A little boy and his mother revel in finding stripe patterns all around them, and there is some heavy selling of the idea "learning is fun": "Mummy look! I can even see some striped food" laughs Harry and "Look, we are sitting on striped seats" laughs Harry. However, the basic idea seems good and there are some nice full page pictures showing various kinds of stripes occurring naturally - zebra skin, a segment of a rainbow, a ploughed field.

It is more than thirty years since *Teddy Bear* first appeared. It is a book which always felt right. The pictures are stark, yet cosy, and the text is sparse and perfectly balanced. After a gap of thirty years, *Teddy Bear* Baker followed a year or so ago, and now we also have *Teddy Bear Postman*. Both the latter stories seem anachronistic compared with the original book. The starkness of the illustrations has been replaced by a more cluttered, conscious nostalgia for the 1940s. But what disappointed me most was the almost identical formula of the three stories. It work-

ed very well indeed once, and it could perhaps have been left at that.

In *Mr Bear Baker* we meet another humanized bear - this time a brown bear rather than a teddy bear - who has already appeared in many amusing books over the years, always accompanied by a gang of very small rabbits. In this book Mr Bear takes over a bakery for a day, and he and the rabbits get carried away and make bread in the shape of bears and rabbits, then ears, crabs and even spectacles. The real baker on his return is furious at first but is soon delighted by his unusual window display.

It always seems curious to me that so few picture books are about children, and *Alfie Gets in First* is in fact the only one in this selection. I have always found Shirley Hughes's books totally irresistible, with her crumpled, lived-in people and relaxed prose. This story is about a little boy who accidentally locks himself into and his mother out of the house. No one panics and naturally the ending is happy. The centre fold of each opening represents the door, so that page and all the goings on outside on the other, as more and more people incidentally, the background - part of a street with a modest row of terraced houses - on closer inspection brims with details, and young readers can follow person, object or animal and their movements over several pages.

Eccentric adults are the main characters in both *Sidney's Friend* and *Bumble's Dream*. *Sidney* is the mild-mannered but determined man who in *Sidney's House* refused to leave his cottage to give way to high-rise flats. In *Sidney's Friend* he makes friends with a deep sea monster who scares the town rigid and is then captured, imprisoned and finally declared non-existent (because nothing remotely like it has ever been seen before), after which *Sidney* smuggles it back whence it came. Mr Bumble in *Bumble's Dream* is a lonely, ridiculed junk dealer who has honours rubbish to build himself a beautiful flying machine. The ugly duckling again provides the theme for *Panda and the Odd Lion*. A rather oddly shaped lion is rejected by his family, goes off into the world and meets a wise panda (who resolved his own identity crisis in a previous book, *Panda's Puzzle*). The panda makes the lion realize that his humphly back

is really a pair of birding wings, and that to have wings is something special and admirable. The lion eventually returns home, full of confidence, and because he now accepts himself, so does everybody else.

It can be a problem to achieve a good balance between text and illustrations in a picture book, and more so when the text has to be translated or adapted from a foreign language. The Italian *The Paper Aeroplane*, which has been "re-told" in English describes making a paper aeroplane and flying off on adventures all round the world. All the adventures in fact take place in the imagination - on the last picture we see that all the exotic ingredients of the adventures are in fact ordinary objects in a room (a globe, a model of a spaceship or picture on the wall). The illustrations are colourful, exciting and all ready to fire the imagination, but somehow the text never takes off; instead it potters on in a kind of skimpy stream of consciousness.

When it comes to translating verse there are additional problems. *A Pig that is Kind* is so awkward to read, aloud or to oneself, that it might have been better to abandon the original verse form altogether. Children's verse does not really work unless it has the unmistakable feel of inevitability. This beginning makes your heart sink: "A glass of milk stands on the table, / Min, though she sees it, isn't able / to tell if there is something in it / that would provide her in a minute / with a small snack." The German original title, "Ein gutes Schwein, bleibt nicht allein" sounds rather better than "A pig that is kind" would be left behind, so I suspect something has been lost in the translation. However, the illustrations are lovely, and there is a temptation simply to ignore the text. The best section illustrates the days of a cat's week (Munchday, Sleuthday, Messday and so on), each with a wonderful snapshot of absurd moments in the life of a cat. *The Happy Garden*, with the label "English version by . . .", is also carried by its pictures, which are very lush. The text is rather dull and general, and somehow it is difficult to get involved in this story about the Garden of Eden.

It is always interesting to see what is new from Anno, and his latest

book, *Anno's Magical ABC*, is most exciting. "An anamorphic alphabet" with letters and pictures deliberately distorted; only when they are reflected in a curved mirror do they assume their right proportions. Some mirror paper is enclosed in the book and there is a graph for making your own anamorphic drawings. I have never seen a book quite like it, and both adults and children were astounded to see the floppy embryo forms suddenly spring into life.

NICK BUTTERWORTH: *B. B. Blacksheep and Company*. Macdonald. £3.95. 0 356 07547 8

WILLIAM STOBBS: *This Little Piggy*. Bodley Head. £3.50. 0 370 30428 4

JOANNA AND WILLIAM STOBBS: *One sun, two eyes, and a million stars*. Oxford University Press. £4.25. 0 19 279747 6

RUTH BROWN: *A Dark, Dark Tale*. Andersen Press. £3.95. 0 86264 001 6

DONALD CREWS: *Light*. Bodley Head. £3.95. 0 370 30507 3

BYRON BARTON: *Building a House*. Julia MacRae. £4.95. 0 86203 051 X

JILL WATERMAN: *Harry's Stripes*. Burke Books. £3.95. 0 222 00760 5

PHOEBE AND SELAV WORTHINGTON: *Teddy Bear Postman*. Warne. £2.95. 0 7232 2768 3

CHIZUKO KURATOMI: *Mr Bear, Baker*. Illustrated by Kozo Kakimoto. Macdonald Futura. £3.95. 0 354 08135 7

SIRLEY HUGHES: *Alfie Gets in First*. Bodley Head. £3.50. 0 370 30417-9

PETER VENTURE: *Sidney's Friend*. Granada. £3.95. 0 246 11590 X

BRUCE TRELOAR: *Bumble's Dream*. Bodley Head. £4.50. 0 370 30424 1

MICHAEL FOREMAN: *Panda and the Odd Lion*. Hamish Hamilton. £3.95. 0 241 10081 X

FULVIO TESTA/LUCY MENDOZA: *The Paper Aeroplane*. Faber. £3.95. 0 571 11845 3

ROBERT GERHART: *A Pig that is Kind*. Illustrated by Almut Gerhardt. Jonathan Cape. £4.50. 0 224 01973 2

SHINYA MIYOSHI: *The Happy Garden*. Methuen. £3.95. 0 416 24390 8

MITSUMASA AND MASACHIRO ANNO: *Anno's Magical ABC*. Bodley Head. £3.95. 0 370 30405 5

Intriguing episodes

By Ruth Hawthorn

FULVIO TESTA:

Doory Story

0 510 00044 4

HELEN OXENBURY:

Bill and Stanley

0 510 00111 4

COLIN McNAUGHTON:

Fat Pig

0 510 00036 6

JUAN WINGAARD:

In Summer When I Go to Bed

0 510 00095 9

Beon. £1.50 each.

The *Little Library* is a series of small hardback books produced by Ernest Beon, and intended for reading aloud to the under fives. The publishers have paid much attention to the material quality of the books, which is unusually good, but apart from that they are hardly a series, written and illustrated as they are by four very different authors. They will certainly appeal to different readers.

I like the simplest, *Doory Story* by Fulvio Testa, best. It somehow achieves the surprises of a pop-up book, without actually being one.

The story is intriguing, but the rhythm of the book is almost more important. Each page starts from the same basic picture, and the surprises come through the door (hence the title). The animals react in different ways to whatever appears. The action is well paced for reading aloud, and there are mysterious details in each episode to dwell over. Who is drinking their way through the bottle on the dresser, full in the first picture and empty in the last? Did you spot the hand? Watch for the mice.

Bill and Stanley is by Helen Oxenbury, and has an equally simple text about a boy who spends a happy afternoon playing with a dog, the twist being that the dog is mostly not acting like a dog at all but like another little child. He helps with the mud pies and appears in battle dress to join in the army game, and only lapses into doggy in a moment of weakness when left alone with a bag of chocolate drops. Again there is plenty of detail in the pictures which are gentle and delicate as well as funny. My only hesitation is over the first page: "Bill ate his cabbage to please his mum: 'Now she will have to play with me', he thought." There is something sad behind that lighthearted tease of mothers and their moral tangles at which I can't laugh. But it does not spoil what follows.

I do, however, have misgivings about *Fat Pig* by Colin McNaughton, a more elaborate story with pictures along more red-blooded comic-book lines. The title role is not a happy one. If he eats a lot, as the farmer and *Fat Pig's* degenerate wild cousins urge him to do, he will grow fat enough to go to market; but this, as his hammy friends point out, means ending his days as pork chops. Only if he *stays* can he survive. Which should he trust, his own instincts and the encouragement of his benign patron, or the raucous crowd of practical jokers, who in fact do win what can only be the first round? The pig theme has honourable precedents, but at least *Pigling Bland* was able to effect a getaway, and Wilbur could shelter behind the eloquence of Charlotte's web: *Fat Pig* is stuck with his awful dilemma. I am not against scary children's books, but this is likely to echo those snore-inducing anxieties of parents and older sisters, and four year olds should not be burdened with such things.

In *Summer when I go to Bed*, by Juan Wingard, is a set of variations on the theme of a poem by Thomas Hood. The pictures are detailed, rich and exotic, the verses are imaginative but light, not quite worthy of the illustrations but good enough to combine with them to produce a lovely picture-book.

FABER are counting the days!

The infant reader

By Lucy Micklethwait

JOHN HENDERSON and GLYNIS MURRAY:

Picture Book One
0 333 32363 7Colour Book One
0 333 32364 5Number Book One
0 333 32362 9

Macmillan 90p each

BINETTE SCHROEDER:

Zebby's breakfast
0 416 05740 6Zebby goes with the wind
0 416 05750 11Shop Zebby Shop
0 416 05750 9Run Zebby Run Run Run
0 416 05741 8Zebby goes swimming
0 416 05741 3

Macmillan, £1.50 each.

Compared with the common or garden Ladybird, the board book is uncommonly expensive. Its justification is that it is more or less indestructible and can therefore be enjoyed by young children unsupervised. The board book is only worth the money, therefore, when its content is suited to its purpose - it must not be such that supervision is essential, and it must not be so bland and banal that the child's interest is quickly exhausted.

In the past the pages of board books have oozed with pictures of puppies and pussies and ducklings and dillies. In this more robust age, we see the household items which, because they feature regularly in the lives of babies, are supposed to interest them - milk bottles, nappies, high chairs and potties. In fact children prefer books which have precise, detailed and busy illustrations, and it is a mistake to think that babies, just because they cannot talk, do not have the nous to enjoy such pictures. At a remarkably early age they will learn to point things out in them, and, left to themselves, they will think hard about them, puzzle over them and wonder.

The series of three board books by John Henderson and Glynis Murray are described as "first books for looking, talking and learning". The infant reader is being taught twelve simple words - shoes, socks, mug, spoon, cat, dog, and six more just as thrilling - twelve colours, and the numbers one to twelve. The pictures are necessarily uncomplicated, and the teaching requires supervision, so that the child left on his own will find little to hold his attention. The illustrations are of excellent quality - bright colour photographs with crisp

fresh outlines - but the content is uniformly dull. The fluffy white toy cat in *Picture Book One*, like his black brother in *Colour Book One*, has a gormless cross-eyed expression, and is arguably even less interesting than the stuffed dog and teddy bear, which have no expression at all. *Colour Book One* shows a red telephone on a red tablecloth, an exceedingly orange nange, a pair of purple shoes (they are mauve), and so on. *Number Book One* shows one milk bottle, three plastic ducks, etcetera. The names, colours and numbers (one, two, three as opposed to 1, 2, 3) are written clearly under the relevant photographs. Considering the uninspiring choice of studio props, the photographer has occasionally been imaginative. There is a satisfying picture of six crayons skidding over a piece of graph paper (brink, un, hunk), another of twelve sweets being tossed up into the air, and another of a green spoon about to scoop up some immaculate orange substance (lunk, no hands again). However, even these supply limited fun for thought.

In contrast, Binette Schroeder's Zebby books are illustrated with a mixture of paint, crayon and what appears to be wrapping paper. Zebby is a zebra of the pudged paninime variety. He is covered from head to tail with equally-matched stripes which, regardless of any position he adopts, lie vertical on the page. It is in *Shop Zebby Shop* that he acquires two pairs of boots. Enter Zebby page left. He is offered a dress, then a green cape with floral trimmings, but what he prefers is a black suit complete with bow-tie and black boots. (One idly wonders whether Zebby, whom I presumed to be male, is in fact female, for the shop assistant - an antelope - is horrified.) Exit Zebby in black boots. In *Zebby Goes Swimming*, Zebby removes his black boots before going for a dip. This is not as prudent as it might seem for over the horizon looms the head of a lion who takes a fancy to the boots and frolics around in them for a bit until he falls over. For Zebby's *Breakfast*, he eats all the flowers on one side of a chasm and then has a precarious journey (in his black boots) across a tree-trunk to the other side. In *Run Zebby Run Run Run* he rushes from page to page (in his black boots) pursued by the aforementioned lion. He stops beside a fence with conveniently malefic stripes and disappears. In the last book, *Zebby Goes with the Wind*, he doesn't actually get blown away himself, but his stripes do, and he is left engagingly foetus-like and miserable (in his black boots). The stripes are restored by the birds and the world smiles again. The sculpted cut-out quality of the art-work here provides little stimulation. Older children will appreciate one or two of the jokes but one must bear in mind that the most successful books for babies can be read inside out, back to front or even upside down.

The River

Vanessa Luff

A new, beautifully detailed picture book by the author/illustrator of *The Cornfield* and *Animals in Winter*. A simple text accompanies the pictures, while more detailed descriptions are given at the back of the book, to help adults discuss the pictures with children.

£3.95

A & C Black



Illustrating atmosphere

By Tanya Harrod

Most fairy tales are a mixture of veiled meaning and straightforward, at times cruel, logic. Their claustrophobic atmosphere is difficult to capture in illustration: perhaps, considering their audience, it is not even desirable to do so. All the same, I could not help feeling dissatisfied with the sumptuous irrelevance of the pictures in some of these books. It was once customary to link a quotation from the text to each illustration. This seems old-fashioned now but it clearly had the advantage of concentrating the artist's mind on a particular passage.

Pauline Ellison's treatment of *Grimm's Fairy Tales* belongs to the popular neo-Flemish school of meticulously observed detail. She creates some striking scenes but few are specifically memorable enough. A pompous introduction by Richard Adams and small print make this a rather unlovable book. The Fairy Tales of Hans Christian Andersen selected and illustrated by Michael Hague are much more attractive. There are a larger number of pictures and they are vividly and simply drawn with a strong historical sense. The illustrations to the Snow Queen are particularly lovely. I suppose that the pictures in a collection of new fairy tales are not of primary importance. Michael Foreman's *Lord of the Rings* did not appeal to me but the stories are clear-headed, improving descendants of the genre and manage to be both funny and moralistic.

The movable element

By Jeremy Treglown

ERIC HILL:

Spot's First Walk
Helmemann, £3.95.
0 434 94289 8

JAN PIENKOWSKI:

Robot
Helmemann, £3.95.
0 434 95643 0

RON VAN DER MEER:

Monster Island
Hamish Hamilton, £4.95.
0 241 10582 X

The Nativity

Kestrel, £4.50.
0 7226 5764 1

Pop-up books are, depending on your point of view, extremely fragile toys with a narrative element, or very inadequate attempts at illustrating mobile illustrations. Any adherent to the Oat Toys ideology of all-world indestructibility is bound to condemn them. I know a copy of Eric Hill's *Spot's First Walk* - a sequel to which, *Spot's First Walk*, has just appeared - in which since the story's publication in 1980, nine of the movable (or rather, removable) elements have been so popular that they now only barely hang together under their dressings of sellotape, and a further one and a half are missing, presumed destroyed. And Jan Pienkowski's *Robot*, of the same year, has suffered similar casualties.

The stories hardly exist. *Spot's First Walk* is about a dog going for a walk, meeting a cat, hen, and so on, and being teached how again. It is as simple, though not as surprising, as *Where's Spot?* Ron van der Meer's *Monster Island* is about two children inexplicably travelling by a balloon which they crash-land on an island full of monsters, and from which they make an implausibly easy escape. This yarn is conveyed to, by my count, 133 words of dreadful dialogue - long-winded, all the same, by contrast with the 69-word postcard which gives *Robot* its tenuous narrative thread.

What is it, then, about these fall-apart non-stories that makes them so compellingly attractive, both to children and to adults? If you were awarding the Booker, McConnell Prize for pop-up books, you might

editors of individual stories tend to be bought principally for their illustrations. Most of the books reviewed below seem designed to appeal more to an adult in search of a pretty present than to a child. Perhaps because I find Hansel and Gretel terrifyingly I prefered Antonella Bollinger-Savelli's folk-story but bald interpretation to Antony Browne's grim modern dress version. It seems odd that the tale of a father, abandoning his offspring in connivance with his second wife should be thought suitable for children. But Hansel and Gretel is also a story of youthful quick-wittedness and bravery and it is sufficiently preposterous for a child to see that it belongs to the realm of fantasy. What then do we make of this contemporary stepmother's squalid dressing table with lipsticks, talcum powder and cigarette ends lovingly depicted by Antony Browne? Is her taste for fake furs and stiletto heels the cause of the family's poverty? Why have the Social Services let them slip through the net? I really cannot envisage buying any child this book.

With Moira Kemp's *Cinderella* we return to the neo-Flemish school of illustration. Here is no end of pointed shoes, fur-edged cloak, and mullioned window. Moira Kemp is a Northern Renaissance Nicola Bayley and her water-colours are magically illusionistic. Only the faces of the protagonists seem lifeless; in every other way the pictures buzz with exquisitely drawn detail.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is simply and well retold by Selina Hastings although it notably lacks the zip

and horror of the classic fairy tale. I imagine that younger children might be puzzled by a story which revolves around a dragon man's chastity whilst older children - not many of them fans of Middle English - might like a little more characterization. Nonetheless this is a very pretty book with decorated endpapers and borders. Juan Wijngaard is very good at depicting embroidered hangings, richly caparisoned horses and wintry woods. He is not so good at people. Sir Gawain is a pale spindly fellow best seen with his visor down. But the book's illuminated manuscript, Pre-Raphaelite look is appealing and the water-colour of Sir Gawain's first glimpse of the Green Knight's castle is truly memorable. I was all set to criticize Errol Le Cain's stylized illustrations for *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp* as another example of needless luxury. But although they are elaborate pastiches of Persian and Indian miniatures most of them are full of humour and life and they work well with the courtly old Andrew Lang text.

The greatest picture books for children have text and illustrations in perfect harmony. I did not feel that this was entirely achieved by any of the books which I have discussed so far, save perhaps Michael Hague's *Hans Christian Andersen*. It is surely significant that Hague felt that he had been preparing his illustrations since childhood. An artist can be lavish, detailed and original but unless he empathizes with his text the exercise will be an empty one. Heidi Holder's refined illustrations for *Aesop's Fables* make this point only too well.

All this brings me to the finest book in this selection, Harold Jones's *Tales from Aesop*. Harold Jones has illustrated the perfect collection of nursery rhymes, *Lavender's Blue*. He has written and illustrated the perfect small child's book, *There and Back Again*. *Tales from Aesop* is equally lovely. Each page is a joy, glowing with luminous colour and alive with bold draughtsmanship. Like many artists who were young in the 1930s his work has a powerful Romanticist siren. He has looked at William Blake and Samuel Palmer. He has even illustrated *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. His sense of mythological, botanical and zoological accuracy are not his concern; but no child could fail to marvel at the insolent cunning of his foxes, at the overwhelming foolishness of his frogs, and with the dreadful plight of his grasshopper. And because of its modest size this wonderful book would fit into any generously proportioned Christmas stocking.

Grimm's Fairy Tales. Illustrated by Pauline Ellison. Selected and introduced by Richard Adams. 128pp. Routledge & Kegan Paul. £6.95. 0 7100 0912 7

Michael Hague's *Favourite Hans Christian Andersen Fairy Tales*. 162pp. Methuen Children's Books. £6.95. 0 416 22080 0

TERRY JONES: *Fairy Tales*. Illustrated by Michael Foreman. 127pp. Pavilion/ Michael Joseph. £6.95. 0 907516 03 3

Grimm's Hansel and Gretel. Illustrated by Antonella Bollinger-Savelli. Kaya and Ward. £3.25. 0 7182 1261 4

Hansel and Gretel. Illustrated by Antony Browne. Julia MacRae Books. £4.95. 0 86203 042 0

Cinderella. Illustrated by Moira Kemp. Hamish Hamilton. £3.95. 0 241 10636 2.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Words by Selina Hastings. Illustrations by Juan Wijngaard. Methuen/Walker Books. £3.95. 0 416 05860 4.

Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp. Illustrated by Errol Le Cain. Retold by Andrew Lang. Faber and Faber. £4.75. 0 571 11656 6.

Aesop's Fables. Illustrated by Heidi Holder. Macmillan. £4.95. 0 333 32202 9.

Tales from Aesop. Written and illustrated by Harold Jones. Julia MacRae Books. £5.95. 0 86203 018 8.

The mind-stretching and the macabre

By Sarah Hayes

LUCKE PSEK: *Trap for Perseus*. Translated from the German by Anthea Bell. Kestrel. £4.95. 0 7226 5748 XDIANA WYNNE JONES: *The Howland Bounders*. Macmillan. £4.95. 0 333 3 0970 0RICHARD DAVIS [Editor]: *Space 7: Science Fiction Stories*. Hutchinson. £5.50. 0 09 14435 0CHARLES ALVERSON: *Time Baudis*. Based on a screenplay by Michael Palin and Terry Gilliam. Sparrow. 95p. 0 09 926030 4DOUGLAS HILL: *Gubric Warlord*. £3.95. 0 575 02663 4. *Deathwing* over *Veyna*. £3.95. 0 575 02779 7. *Day of the Starwind*. £4.50. 0 575 02917 X. *Planet of the Warlord*. £4.50. 0 575 03009 7. Col-lance.TERRANCE DICKS: *Doctor Who and an Unearthly Child*. Target paper-backs. £1.25. 0 426 20144 XNICHOLAS FISK: *Robin Revolt*. Pelham. £4.50. 0 7207 1332 3H. M. HOOPER: *Return to Earth*. £4.95. 0 416 20810 X. *The Last Star*. £4.95. Methuen.BRIAN EARNshaw: *Dragonfall 5 and the Enquiry Planet*. r.p. 0 416 84221 8. *Dragonfall 5 and the Space Cowboys*. 60p. 0 416 84251 X. Magnific.JILL PAIND WALSIE: *The Green Book*. Macmillan. £4.95. 0 333 31910 9PHILIP CURTIS: *Mr Browner and the Countess*. Andersen Press. £3.95. 0 86264 104 11HUGH WATERS: *The Dark Triangle*. Faber. £4.95. 0 571 11584 5

landscape. Even the evil Daleks, intelligent beings embodied in machinery, have a chubby clinical shape, a silly walk (or glide) and a splendidly predictable method of extermination. It is the thrill of a known fear that doesn't linger in the mind that enlivens the best of Doctor Who, on and off the screen.

The mechanical menace - the possibility of society being taken over by machines - is a familiar SF theme, but the versatile Nicholas Fisk gives it a new turn in his thought-provoking novel, *Robot Revolt*. Like many juvenile SF writers, Mr Fisk does not share adult Sci-Fi's inability to handle character: his futuristic gospel sect, with its blinkered chapel puncts and hellfire preacher are fine fully realized creations. Hez and Abi, offspring of the Pastor of the Shining Light Belrock Grapellers, have the irreverence of all vicar's children, and their quotation of biblical texts at unsuitable moments is a delight. Their world is not a happy one, though, for their father is a fanatic, gradually starving his weak wife to death, having allowed three of his children to die in infancy on account of his principles. The appearance of Max, a sophisticated Robomart Mark III programmed with a complex ethical code, seems to be the solution to the children's problems. His moral consciousness can be subverted to despise Father. While Max perceives the need to be rid of the Pastor, it is not for the children's sake - all his free time has been spent at the cassette library absorbing revolutionary literature by the casuel. The Pastor outmanoeuvres Max by poking fun at his robots' revolutionary rally, so Max destroys the Pastor's credibility by revealing his criminal neglect of his wife and children. The Robot Revolt, too, is damned to ignominy, for the boss of Robomart, the enigmatic, ungrammatical Mr Tynha has been watching over Max right from the start.

In *Robot Revolt* the propaganda of religion and revolution are equated, while in H. M. Hooper's *Return to Earth* it is industrial power that is compared with religion. A retiring planetary governor comes home to find his country efficiently run by a giant industrial conglomerate, but his people under the sway of the Dolmen's Nest Egg cult, which uses drugs and extravagant rituals to part people from their money. The governor and the young heiress to the conglomerate are dumped in the desert as the Dolmen plans a takeover. Rescued by a primitive people who desire no taint of civilization and can't wait to get rid of their unwanted guests, the two return to break the Dolmen's power and breathe a new more compassionate life into the workings of the conglomerate.

Although resolutely sticking to the anonymity of initials, H. M. Hooper

new confidence, he returns to civilization, to find himself not in the radiation hell of his imaginings, but in the relative luxury of the bureaucratic quarters. The final scene of Blair closing the hatchway against the arrival of yet another Perseus mission, questions the whole re-education process.

Psek's ability to juggle with ideas on a grand scale, and embody them in a highly readable and compulsive story is the essence of good science fiction and typical of the anti-utopian genre of which Orwell and Huxley are distinguished masters. Diana Wynne Jones is less interested in moral philosophy than in the ingenious processes of the human mind. In her rich and inventive novel, *The Howland Bounders*, she postulates a fantasy War Game that applies to all worlds and times. During his many traverses, thirteen-year-old Jamie encounters such eternal homeward bounders as the Wandering Jew and the Flying Dutchman - he even finds Prometheus, bound not for home but for eternity. His chains are anchored by hope; freedom can only be gained when the anchor crumbles, but he is bound to hope for all time. Tense paradoxes and word-plays abound. The final solution, following an onslaught on the wargamers by a combination of children and demon-hunters, involves the freeing of Prometheus and Jamie's decision to walk the Bounds for ever. He is the ultimate random factor necessary for the preservation of all other realities - an idea that fits in and out of the mind like the solution to Rubik's cube. Diana Wynne Jones's stamina is extraordinary, for pace and cerebral fertilization are maintained marvelously right to the end of this fascinating novel.

So many adult science fictions depend on one good idea which is essentially static and makes for weak endings. The short story, whose ending is so often its raison d'être, is the perfect vehicle for the single brilliant idea, a madman who is the first to answer his questions about Argo, but he too must be killed if Blair is to survive. And so Blair comes full circle, realizing that freedom itself is an illusion, as is the absolute value of any moral law. Naked, but with a

its embassy has to be displayed as a pocket-sized kinetic sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art; or the chilling concept of a machine transmitting summer holidays which malfunctions and cause one child to create his own mental holiday, not for ten weeks, but for good. There is a menace behind many of these stories - nuclear threat, ecological disaster or simple human greed - which is characteristic of much (though not all) science fiction.

A curiosity, which both acknowledges and mocks the literary heritage of SF is *Time Baudis* (the book of the film). An anarchic attitude to world history and its tired system of morals embues the time travels of six thieves and one small boy as they plunder their way through Napoleonic Italy, Robin Hood's forest, Agamemnon's Greece, and on into giant territory towards the groto of Evil. Evil - as prosaic a character as the competent middle-management Supreme Being - plans to rewrite world history on technological times and is corroborated by his pals.

There is nothing at all prosaic about the evil that haunts the pages of Douglas Hill's fine last *Legionary* quartet of books. The term "space opera" is said to derive from soap opera and thus to be the equivalent of pulp fiction of the mindless, action-packed, violent sort. It is true that Mr Hill eschews philosophy, that his books are eventful and pacy, and do not duck painful deaths and violent encounters. But there the similarity ends: these books are adventure fiction of a very high order indeed. Quite simply (for those who still remember) the best thing since Dan Dare and the Mekon. Like Larry Niven (another despised but inventive operator), Mr Hill elevates the label space opera to describe a fast-moving, utterly compelling, large-scale work with a cast of billions.

His wide screen embraces the inhabited worlds, planets and moons that have been pecked by humans following "the Scattering". The barish planet of Moros has evolved a race of fighting men and women known as the Legions, whose inherited physical skills, trained discipline and superior weaponry become legendary. A mysterious nuclear device destroys

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ANNE FINE
A powerful picture of adolescent feelings in which Tom and Cass, who are twins, discover that their innocent childhood together has turned into a dark and sinister relationship. £4.95

The Golden Goose

IVAN SOUTHALL
In this gripping sequel to *King of the Spies*, young August, who is a driver, is forced to follow the wild and roving master story-teller, this mind-stretching tale is complete with action-packed drama and larger than life characters. £5.50

Methuen Children's Books

er's writing reveals her to be a woman. To be shamelessly sexist, the refreshing presence of female protagonists, the gentler (almost soft-centred) approach, and the interest in moods and feelings add a new dimension to the laser edge of male orientated SF. Ms. Hoover's *Lost Star* describes the rebirth of a potato-shaped alien race brought about by the empathy of a lone teenage girl. The gradual restoration to power of the untranslatable computer that controls the aliens' intelligence is beautifully conceived, as are incidental details such as the erablike precision-engineering aliens. The novel is marred, however, by the faintest whiff of sentimentality.

Science Fiction is a great breeder of genres, and it's always pleasing to see the models overturned. One writer who has always quietly been a law unto himself is Brian Evershaw whose decrepit spaceship *Dragonfall 5* has delighted younger children for years. *Dragonfall 5* and the *Space Cowboys* and *Dragonfall 5* and the *Empty Planet* are cheerful, easy to read and full of jokes and pleasing inventions such as algae which mutates into blue-green space pastures, or the self-explanatory painful scissor plant, or musical stones that sing every thousand years to prevent boredom setting in. The family that inhabits *Dragonfall 5* has a happy-go-lucky attitude that asks little of its reader.

Jill Paton Walsh is a distinguished writer who aims at the same age group, but asks much more of her readers. *The Green Book* is a sombre tale of the difficulties of colonizing a new planet. The adults wrangle, make wrong decisions, and worry while the children explore Shinc, their beautiful new home, to discover food sources and make friends with the inhabitants, giant but short-lived moths who dance and die. The colonists, too, are doomed because the corn they brought with them has grown up crystalline. Again the children show the way by making and

eating bread from the glassy hexagonal corn. They survive, and young Pattle tells their story, writing it in the empty green book which, much to everyone's annoyance, she chose to bring on the voyage out. It is a pity the publishers hadn't the imagination to bind and jacket this book in green - it wouldn't have spoilt the surprise.

The Green Book's pervasive and ultimately irritating melancholy is matched by the selkoth heartiness of *Mr Browner* and the *Comet Crisis*, a misguided attempt to tie up the school story and the alien takeover. The opening is splendidly downbeat, however, with aliens in the shape of three very, very ordinary humans emerging from the sea (having been dropped off Hallett's Comet) to seek anonymity before they take over the world. The alien boy's downfall is his uncanny expertise at marbles, which gives the game away as the story degenerates into farce.

Finally to *The Dark Triangle*, a novel by the faithful Hugh Walters, whose SF protagonists follow a familiar pattern of high-level extra-terrestrial meddling. In this one the PM and the President are kidnapped in the Bermuda Triangle, and whisked off to the planet Scumbria by dolphin-like beings. The United Nations Explorations Agency sends its special deputy, Chris Gindrey, and his trio of friends to investigate. Not only do they bring back the bigwigs, but they have also been given the key to harnessing solar energy. The world can breathe again. *The Dark Triangle* doesn't exercise brain or imagination, but Hugh Walters is much loved by children and read perhaps by less able teenagers. The continued success of so undistinguished a writer is a comforting reminder that enduring forms of literature attract practitioners at all levels of appeal and ability.

Readers who remain unconvinced should remember Kurt Vonnegut's creation, the outrageous pulp SF writer Kilgore Trout, whose plots had the uncanny habit of coming true.

Building new worlds

By Holly Eley

VIRGINIA HAMILTON:
The Gathering
Julia MacRae, £5.25,
0 86203 10774

The Gathering, volume three of Virginia Hamilton's alluring but incohesive trilogy, is an innovative book: likely to engender a spate of analysis from Black Studies Departments, it is difficult to understand and not easy to read. Children who have read *Justice* and *Her Brothers* in which the twins, Thomas and Levi Douglas, their sister Justice and their friend Dorian Jefferson helve (most of the time) like ordinary, tough twelve or thirteen-year-olds with a Tom Sawyerish sense of humour, then *Dustland* in which their extra-sensory powers propel them into a gloomy world inhabited by humnoid and mythical creatures, will be undisturbed by its peremptory introduction to extra-terrestrial activity.

The unit was power. It had the fire of four who were time-travellers. Now it was between its present and that future it knew as Dustland. It was in the Crossover between times. The Crossover cooed with sighs and whispers of mind-travellers trapped in it for eternity. Those travelers had failed to hold their concentration while mind-jumping from one time to another. They were trapped forever in the nowhere between times - unless, as swarming multi-beings, they grew powerful enough to fly their way out. They attempted to capture new time-travellers, such as the unit on its way to Dustland.

Justice, Thomas, Levi and Dorian (transformed in a time warp into

"the unit") have returned to Dustland (a country akin to the dust storm-plagued mid-west prairies of the 1930s) in order to guide the decrepit three-legged Slaker mutants to freedom. But once there, they encounter, empathize with and decide to help the half-child leggens, smooth keeps and youngens who, grouped in "puckens" of threes, are inching their way towards a Celestial City in the face of threats from other species of marauding mutants and the omnipotent Mal. They join forces and the vicissitudes of their progress to what proves to be a dystopian illusion provide straightforward adventure and the most intelligible section of *The Gathering*.

H. G. Wells, Orwell's and Aldous Huxley's accounts of the hazards of a future in which man's obsession with scientific advancement has superseded his concern for humanity are all more accessible than *The Gathering*. But Virginia Hamilton's *Colossus*, the crippled computer which controls Domity with its smooth-running transport system, clement climate and tranquil, because drugged, inhabitants is not complacent. Its robotic Interpreter, Celester remembers the satisfactions of self-determination and the *Colossus* continues to hope that it may regain contact with the few survivors (or superior twentieth-century humans) who escaped to another planet after their relentless pursuit of technology and nuclear power had destroyed the world and reduced the less gifted survivors to wanderers in Dustland.

Hope that the reconstruction of a free world may be possible is indi-

cated by Justice's willingness to give her particularly sensitive psychic power to the *Colossus*, even though in so doing she may be marooned forever in the Crossover. With her power the *Colossus* may be able to contact the Starters and together they will rebuild a humanitarian, if imperfect, planet. More interestingly, the youthful puckens, who have never wholly lost their independence, decide to return to and make the best of purgatorial Dustland.

Her depiction of the aftermath of holocaust is, once one has worked out how to follow the narrative, predictable; though the possibility of an optimistic solution, however distant and for however few, is refreshing. Oblique allusion to black folklore, traditional American children's books such as Frank Baum's *Wizard of Oz*, comics and junior science fiction annals will not be easily followed by British children and one is often tempted to treat *The Gathering* as a treasure hunt. The arbitrary use of lower case personal pronouns and dated hip-phrasology ("Be tight, you... be tight me") are irritating, because drugged, rather than welcome clues.

But it is not easy to deal with the complicated genre of science-fictional allegory for children while at the same time encouraging black confidence. Among Virginia Hamilton's more inventive devices are the children's abolitionist and humanist narnas of Douglas and Jefferson - a clear encouragement to young blacks, though also possibly a warning against losing touch with their roots and becoming the strongest of Starters.

Paperbacks in brief

Alice and Martin Provensen: *The Mother Goose Book* (Beaver Books, £1.95, 0 600 20478 2). 1980. A collection of familiar rhymes, songs and sayings laid out in double-page spreads with tiny pictures and decorations. Ages under 5.

Mary Dickinson: *Alex's Bed*. Illustrated by Charlotte Furman. (Hippo, 90p, 0 590 70071 5). 1980. Alex's room is "just like a dump" so his Mum builds a bed on tall ladders to give him more room. A ladder, a safety rail and a hanging table take care of some problems but Alex's untidiness cannot be solved. Ages 5 to 7.

Colette O'Hare: *Seven Years and a Day*. Illustrated by Beryl Cook. (Fontana, £1.25, 0 00 661899 5). 1981. The Mulholland's six-toed magic cat has everything arranged to his satisfaction and can even remove the human who seems to stand between him and an even easier life. Beryl Cook's sophisticated naïve pictures complement the operation of domestic magic. Ages 5 to 7.

Hans Christlison Andersen: *The Snow Queen*. Illustrated by Errol Le Cain. (Puffin, 95p, 0 14 030294 7). Original. A new version by Naomi Lewis of the story of Gerda's journey through the winter lands in search of Kay whose heart has been pierced by a splinter of ice. Ages 5 to 7.

Margaret Mahy: *The Great Piratical Rumbustication and The Librarian and the Robbers*. Illustrated by Quentin Blake. (Puffin, 90p, 0 14 031261 7). 1978. Two funny stories. The pirates hold a party at the Terrapin's new house and Mr Terrapin discovers a more relaxed attitude to life. A band of robbers kidnap a librarian who teaches them to become "more cultural and philosophical" by reading them stories. Ages 5 to 7.

Julia Watson: *The Puffin Book of Funny Verse*. (Puffin, 85p, 0 14 031333 8). A varied collection of humorous poems for children which range from the works of Lear, Belloe and Ogden Nash to those of Ted Hughes, Charles Causley and Spike Milligan. Ages 5 to 7.

Raymond Briggs: *Gentleman Jim* (Hamish Hamilton, £1.95, 0 241

10698 2). The dry dreams of a Birmingham lorry attendant and the penalty for trying to make them come true related in Briggs's familiar comic-strip style with bubbles. Ages 7 to 11.

Diann Wynne Jones: *The Four Grannies* (Beaver 75p, 0 600 204065 5). 1980. Erg and Emily's four grandmothers come to look after them while their parents are away. Their task is not made easier by Erg's magic inventions. Ages 7 to 11.

Tessa Krailing: *Washington and the Marrow Raiders* (Hippo, 80p, 0 590 70092 8). Original. Susan Ramage's grandfather finds a footprint in his marrow bed but with the help of Aunt Barbara a celebrated inventor and a life-like model of a real boy called Washington, the marrow thieves are thwarted. Ages 7 to 11.

Ian Woodward: *An A-Z of Monsters* (Beaver, 95p, 0 600 20325 5). Original. A catalogue of monsters from the Abominable Snowman to Zu the Dragon which provides the reader with most the known facts. Ages 7 to 11.

Mory Stewart: *A Walk in Wolf Wood* (Knight, 95p, 0 340 36537 X) 1979. John and Margaret slip back in time to medieval Germany and a world of spells and enchantments. They break the magic which has turned Mardiao into a wolf and restore happiness to the kingdom and to Duke Otho and his son. Ages 11 to 13.

Nina Bayden: *The Robbers* (Puffin, 95p, 0 14 031317 6). 1979. Philip Holbein has to leave his grandmother and her grace and favour castle for a new life in London with his father and stepmother. There he encounters a different way of life and meets Darcy who lives across the canal and who leads him in to danger and a moral dilemma. Ages 11 and over.

K. M. Peyton: *A Midsummer Night's Death* (Puffin, £1.04, 031355 9). 1978. The death of the ineffective English master at the progressive school Meddingtoo, involves Jonathan Meredith in a conflict of loyalties, and considerable danger. Ages 11 and over.

Lure of flying

By Arthur Marshall

J. M. BARRIE:

Peter Pan

Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman
Hodder and Stoughton, £7.95,
0 340 26430 6

Many good stories which have begun their lives as books have wound up, dramatized, as plays or films. Indeed, very few famous novels have escaped what has, on the whole, been not too bad a fate. The reverse process is more of a rarity and one wonders what led Barrie in 1911 to reproduce in fiction form the play of *Peter Pan*, which first triumphantly saw the light seven years earlier in 1904. It can hardly have been inspired by financial necessity (the little genius left - and this in the 1930s - nearly a quarter of a million). Letters from children, perhaps, longing to hear more? A request from parents for suitable bedtime reading aloud (increasingly, alas, a thing of the past)? Obsession with his subject?

"The gallery boys won't stand it." We owe to Barrie himself this harsh and inaccurate opinion expressed by a goomy stage-hand before the first performance. And now, nearly eighty years later and with modern audiences much less naïve and altogether tougher, how does the

play fare? The cheering answer is, as well as ever. The actors still have to shout their lines through the children's excited chatter ("Why is Tiger Lily looking so cross?"). And although no actress in the title role can ever make one forget Jean Forbes-Robertson, who played it for nine seasons, *Peter Pan* has an indelible magic in the theatre. A child's fascination with pirates, mermaids, flying, dogs as nannies, underground homes and redskins on the prowl isn't going to vanish overnight.

I rather suspect, however, that the average age of a contented youthful audience is now fairly low. During the last century, juvenile maturity seems to have advanced itself by about two years. At what age do children, boys anyway, now start scoffing at the mere idea of fairies and Neverlands? Eight? Six? Four? And with poor old Santa going phut at about the same age.

Barrie was no fool and was well aware that appeals to the members of an audience not to let the fairy Tinker Bell die would not always meet with a unanimously favourable response ("Mummy clapped. Some didn't. A few little beasts hissed"). But in general who could resist a crocodile with one of Captain Hook's arms and an alarm clock in its inside, a kite which rescued a stranded Wendy from the lagoon, and, above all, a happy ending for all concerned in the snug and womb-

like warmth of a Bloomsbury night nursery.

The appeal of the play is constant but about the book one is not so sure. Init. Barrie followed the play very closely and what emerges is the stage dialogue with the copious stage directions (usually, with this author, as long as the spoken words) let into the text. A child's stage directions, coy, arch, roguish, whimsical and pretty frightful, have been objects of derision for some time. Undergraduate play-reading societies, seeking a light-hearted and ribald end-of-term treat, have been known to read out *Peter Pan*, in toto and to ear-splitting shrieks.

For with the visual and dramatic impact absent, what are we to make of the *Lost Boys*' favourite drink ("calabashes of pop-pop"), of the Indian braves' warlike cries of "Scalp um, oh, velly quick", followed by "Ugh, ugh, wah", of mermaids "going plo-plop", of lark Wendy "playing rum-tum" on the sleeping John and announcing that she would like to "squeeze" Peter? There is a wince whichever way you look.

And yet, so strong is the story that a mother with a sense of the theatre and the ability to vet the text and remove doubtful material, might still manage to grip a child audience safely tucked up in bed and with the nightlights lit (they're going to need them for the pirate passages). It is certainly worth a try and the latest edition, attractively illustrated, is to be recommended.

Yesterday's lessons

By Ruth Harris

OWLDAYS AND BRIAN REES- WILLIAMS:

What I Cannot Tell My Mother
Oxford University Press, £7.95,
0 19 21 2223 1

What I cannot tell my mother is not fit for me to know - an admirable sentiment in the nursery but a clumsy title for a book, clumsy and also misleading because Kate goes straight to her mother and continues to believe in the gooseberry bush. The secret that the other children were whispering about is never learnt and the reader perhaps has the right to feel cheated.

Victorian pictures are now being bought not always for their quality but because the spiral of taste has now come round, prices are rising and the period has become fashionable. This miscellany refers to such a climate of opinion. Text and illustrations come from the Rees-Williams's books and the books themselves must be fascinating but why was this particular selection made and for whom is it intended? Not for the historian or scholar and yet it is not the criterion. A selection from our Ladybird reading-books, might be interesting if published in a hundred years time but time wouldn't make them into literature and we don't even find here the drama of "ten men met in a den" which makes

"Reading without Tears" so memorable. How then do the compilers intend us to react? There is no introduction but the advertisement talks about "a humorous slant" and the slant somehow is a little awkward. "The Band of Hope Boy's Recliner" may strike a comic note but drink was a menace to the family rather than a personal problem in the days when children lying in bed were woken up by the noise that drunks made when the pub were closing. To be simply outmoded isn't to be funny.

Of course it is illuminating to go back to a different way of thinking and to work out the differences between yesterday and today. Every picture told a story and every story points a moral. Bruce learnt his lesson from a spider and Tom learnt to persevere from watching a snail climbing a wall. Slow Tom gets a prize at last and this is as it should be but are we meant to clap or to amble? The Victorians were more at home with death than we are: "Noises which would not frighten you frighten baby. Many a sick child has been killed in this way". The book is divided into sections, a posy for each day of the week, and each day begins and ends with a prayer or hymn. This perhaps is the essential difference in teaching. Children used to go to Sunday School whereas now they are taught comparative religion. Some of these prayers are lovely: "I will not fear/For God is near/Through the dark night/as in the light/And while I sleep/Safe watch will keep/Why

should I fear/When God is near?" a rune to comfort any child when the only light is on the landing, but some of them are doggerel and again we don't quite know where we are. It is this variation in quality and subject that makes the collection such a brain-tub. We turn from learning how to light a fire at the top, so that the smoke will have to pass through the fire and be consumed, to a jingle about naughty Johnny and the measles and dates vary over a period of more than sixty years. Even the illustrations, delightful as they are, seem to be chosen at random and some of them are taken from works published in this century. Only the black and white half-title pictures are identified and it would have been kind to give page references.

Mrs Gatty, Miss Yonge and Mrs Molesworth were writing in the period covered by this book and were exploring the continent of childhood but these excerpts are taken from ordinary schoolbooks and everything here is seen from the teacher's point of view. One waits in vain, for the poetic moments, for the fire to come alive. The teachers are in charge and they know that they are right. We may feel nostalgia for the safe world of fannel nightgowns alighting on the nursery fender but don't forget the dark corner on the stairs and the impossibility of making the grown-ups understand. Because they lived a hundred years ago and were made to say their prayers it doesn't mean that children then were different. It was only the rules and this book, unimportant as it is, may help you remember what they were.

JAN NEEDLE:

Wild Wood

Deutsch, £5.95,
0 233 97346 X

Most of us read masterpieces rather than write them. Some, however, prefer to rewrite them. Swear a linker or is Jan Needle. It is unclear though whether his rewriting of *The Wind in the Willows* is a labour of love or loathing. Perhaps, it is just an act of completion, an attempt to acclimatise onto the original palimpsest of the other side of the story that has been censored in Grahame's or the collective unconscious. Or it could be just a joke. Indeed, the concept is witty: to make the other side of the story the story of the weasels, stoats and ferrets who took over Toad Hall book, especially a book which is parodic on one of the great comic novels, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is not as good a play as

Hamlet, but it is funnier, at least it is more persistent if not more profound in its humour. *Wild Wood* though, does not begin to match *The Wind in the Willows*'s joyous, anarchic yet poignant humour, its inventiveness, its wit, the necessity of its balance between satire and the telling of a story, between the human and animal worlds. Needle's book offers itself to be compared with the most beautifully written of children's books but its language wits besides Grahame's mastery prose. Social division among creatures great and small may be broken down in *Wild Wood* but differences in the class of creators are only confirmed. Grahame at least offers us redemption, bourgeois and individualistic though it might be. Needle merely confirms the impotence and comic absurdity of many radical groups with good intentions who fail to change the world.

Andrew Hishop

Sunshine to Moonlight...

The Little Moon Theatre

IRENE HAAS

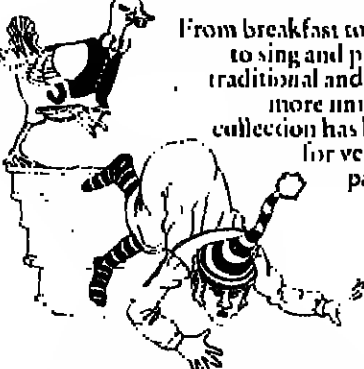
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Nigel Hinton, illustrated by Peter Rush

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Piloting spaceship earth

By F. W. Kellaway

ADAM FORD:
Weather Watch
0 416 05670 9
JOHN SATCHEL:
Energy at Work
0 416 05660 1
DAVID LAMBERT:
The Active Earth
0 416 05650 4
Methuen, £3.95 each.

There is a sensible common pattern for these three books, with words and pictures woven to give clear, if necessarily attenuated, explanations of scientific phenomena. Development of each subject leads to a final section on the future, where reasonable indicators show possibilities likely to be realized in the lifetime of young readers.

Perhaps the most effective of the trio is the introduction to meteorology, and this is because the topic can be more readily related to personal experience than can, say, volcanoes or nuclear power stations. Weather reports seen on the television screen have brought familiarity with the standard phrases and the principles of forecasting.

Adam Ford adds the background. He shows how winds are caused,

distinguishes between them in terms of direction, content, temperature and strength, and explains about thermometers and barometers. He interprets also the creation and effect of the more powerful winds. In an account of the relationship between cyclones and hurricanes, he writes that "the word hurricane is from the name of a West Indian storm god. In the Pacific Ocean, these storms are called typhoons, and in Australia they are known as willy-willies." Incidentally, some authorities restrict the use of typhoon to the China Seas, presumably because of the commonly assumed derivation from the Chinese dialect, *wi-fong*, for great wind. Snow and hail, dew and rainbows, man's ability to change the weather and to create microclimates, and advice on building one's own rain gauge, are other features of an intriguing text.

Practical experimentation is also encouraged in the volume on energy. Games are devised to engender a recognition of the need to conserve energy. There are instructions on making a simple anemometer and a device for converting potential to kinetic energy, while other exercises are concerned with the efficiency of machines. All this is associated with careful expositions on sources of power, the sun heading a list which includes wind and waves, water and plants, fossil fuels and, of course, the nuclear process. The whole is up-to-date enough to include the feasibility of geothermal and tidal power, and

realistic enough to show the dangers of radioactivity and of excessive waste of energy. There may be some puzzlement in a picture of a heat-sensitive film, but generally the illustrations help to convey the message.

The many coloured drawings in *The Active Earth* are especially effective. End plates showing earth's time-scale from 4,000 million years ago to 40 million years ahead should give a sense of perspective. The merging or splitting of continents, the differing ratios of land and water, and all of nature's massive geological and climatic transformations, are elucidated in this overview of an ever-changing globe.

The three books are complementary with, indeed, some overlapping of topics. They explain appropriately for young readers something about the world in which they live. So much high technology is taken for granted that it is salutary to be confronted with the hazards and consequences of oil supplies running out or a new ice age or a nuclear disaster. Equally, there are common sense pointers to the good life that could be more universally available if man used his new found knowledge wisely. Pollution and destruction could be replaced by conservation and a richer well-being for more people. The basic knowledge in this series could lead to subsequent deeper reading and understanding.

Political fables

By Kamini Knill

CHAZ DAVIES, RUHI HAMID and CHRIS SEARLE (Editors):
Tales of Mozambique
Young World Books, £2.
0 905405 04 8

"And this is the reason why the pig has a squashed nose and never wants to fly any more..." If you want to know more about the leucis-like fate of a pig who tried to compete with a kite, why cats and dogs are traditional enemies, why the lion roars and erodeflies are aggressive, or read an alternative to Kipling's account of how the leopard got his spots, then *Tales of Mozambique*, a collection of fables from the African oral tradition, will provide some intriguing answers.

This book comes from a new publishing house, "Young World Books", which intends to specialize in Third World children's fiction, with the aim of eliminating prejudice and introducing young people to a variety of unfamiliar cultures. The collection was first published in 1977 in Portuguese by FRELIMO, the People's Government in Mozambique. Not surprisingly, therefore, the political allegory underlies several of the tales. "Senhor Boko, the Hippopotamus" is an allegory of the Mozambiquean revolution and the unstable world of the now disbanded dynasties (forums for, among other things, accusation of disloyalty). "Senhor Boko" is reluctant to join the struggle against the Mavindjis (jackals); he is too comfortable leading a "fat life". However, when the jackals have been overthrown and freedom won, he recognizes the advantages of exploiting the new collective farm life. He attempts to increase his own standing by maliciously denouncing an innocent lizard for laziness and reluctance to participate in the new life. "Senhor Boko's" disloyalty is eventually recognized when he flees with much of the animals' harvest.

Those tales which most obviously attempt to propagate political ideas are the least successful. "The Well in the Forest", in which the lazy rabbit tries to take advantage of the hard-working monkey, is weakened by the

addition of a final paragraph explicitly relating the story to the evils of colonialism. Generally, however, political comment and allusion are more subtle and in most cases the young reader would remain unsuspecting—whether one considers this an advantage or not.

As in most folk tales and fables, justice and morality are recurring themes which are emphasized by a rigidly defined animal world, a microcosm of the human world, where good is rewarded and evil harshly punished. Only intelligence and cunning escape censure: for example, Simba the Wildcat (who is vividly presented in an accompanying cartoon-strip) and the rabbit emerge as heroes who overcome the traditional kings of the jungle—lions, elephants and hippopotamuses—by virtue of their superior wits. A little disconcerting, perhaps, for parents attempting to create a moral sense in their children.

Part of the appeal of the tales lies in the names used which surely capture a child's imagination—helpful translations of these appear after each tale. We are introduced to the Gula-Gula (small lizard), pin-piri pepper and juga beans, Guazi the water bird and Sungura the rabbit, the evil quizzumbas (hyenas) and their ruler Queen Fissi; though a few especially colourful ones may prove stumbling blocks for pronunciation, such as the children's names Muro-nangunganya and Chivanganga.

Like all folk tales, these tales can be read by all ages; however, the consistent political slant often brings with it a number of terms and expressions unfamiliar to children and some which are probably intelligible only to those acquainted with the recent history of Mozambique. The undeniable charm of many of the illustrations and some of the tales themselves becomes distorted. Yet, for these very reasons, the collection provides a greater insight into the culture and development of their country of origin than do collections from other countries.

Tales of Mozambique appears as a large, glossy paperback generously filled with black and white illustrations. These are by eighteen artists from all parts of the world and range widely in style and medium—ink drawing, pen and wash, woodcut.

Learning from nature

By Peter Dance

EDWARD S. AYENSU (Editor):
Jungles
Cape, £6.95.
0 224 01881 7.

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER:
The Portrait of a Tortoise
Virago, £3.50.
0 80668 218 8

Recommended by the World Wildlife Fund, *Jungles* is a feast for the eyes and the mind. A combination of excellent, sometimes stunning, illustrations in colour and line and an authoritative, well-edited text brings out the beauty and the wonder, the danger and the tragedy of the jungle environment. The dust-jacket says, "A Natural History Guide for the Young"; this is only a half truth. It is for everyone, including all those book packagers and publishers who assume so easily that pictures alone make a book.

Although it still leaves me wondering what it feels like to be in a jungle I am absolutely certain this book shows me far more of jungle life than I should see if I spent twenty years in one. As rich as the jungle itself it is not merely an aid to education, no is also hinged on the dust-jacket. It is education, of the highest order.

It is a far cry from the teeming jungle to the sequestered garden of Gilbert White, the home for many years of Timothy, a twice-privileged tortoise. Privileged first because he was cared for by the famous father of parochial natural history and im-

mortalized by him in *The Natural History of Selborne*. Privileged second because, long afterwards, he was made the subject of a delightful book by the late Sylvia Townsend Warner, better known perhaps as an authority on the Church Music of Tudor England, and the distinguished authoress of *Mr. Fortune's Maggot*, and as a minor poet.

A slim volume by any standards, *The Portrait of a Tortoise* was originally published by Chatto and Windus in 1946 and had long been out of print. The recent re-issue now enables a new generation to read about the adventures of Timothy from the day in 1780, when he was removed from the garden of one Rebecca Snooke to that of Gilbert White, until 1794 when he died, a reputed sergoterian. The naturalist had died the previous year, a blow from which Timothy never recovered.

That Gilbert White should have been interested in Timothy's activities should surprise no one. But why should Sylvia Townsend Warner lavish her considerable talents on a mere tortoise? Part of the answer, at least, is provided in a *Spectator* article by Ronald Bryden who pointed to her "miraculous nose for character". That nose was especially good at sniffing out the character of animals. For her, as for Gilbert White, Timothy was no ordinary tortoise. The introduction to her book, together with relevant extracts from *The Natural History of Selborne*, was intended to show that Timothy was special. It succeeded in making him unique.

There may be other tortoises who delight in crawling up flower banks and are "earnest for the leaves of poppies", but there never was and never will be another tortoise like

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commentary

The most poetical of painters

By Richard Wollheim

Poussin: *Sacraments and Bacchanals*
National Gallery of Scotland

The National Gallery of Scotland's Poussin exhibition is perfect in size. It consists of thirty-three paintings, twenty-seven drawings, an engraving after a work destroyed, and a model of the kind of model Poussin is known to have used to organize complex compositions. Of the paintings, one preserves a design by Poussin but does not pretend to be by him; a second does, but imperceptibly; of a third it would be nice to think that it was by him; a fourth, the Montpellier "Venus and Adonis", is a work of great intensity and eroticism, whoever it is by. The remaining pictures record with exemplary precision the development of an artist of genius throughout the first half of his career and somewhat over the threshold into the second half. The drawings are largely complementary to the paintings, and the greater number relate to the three series which are the glory of the exhibition: the *Bacchanals*, and the *Sacraments*, and the *Myths*, together for the first time.

I cannot believe that at this moment there is anywhere in the world a single room—Islamic tiles, north Italian frescoes, plain white walls, whatever—which I at any rate, and I cannot be alone, would find more successful.

Nicolas Poussin arrived in Rome from Paris via Venice in early 1624. He worked there until 1640, when he was invited to return to Paris. In Paris he found himself committed to large-scale decorative projects which were quite uncommensurate to his nature, and he returned to Rome, where he was able to devote himself to the study of antiquity and to the study of the great masters of the past. He was able to devote himself to the study of antiquity and to the study of the great masters of the past. He was able to devote himself to the study of antiquity and to the study of the great masters of the past.

But the deepest misunderstanding in connection with Poussin's artistic development is to place an unwarranted emphasis upon the shift of stylistic allegiance. In effect, to regard it as symbolizing the renunciation of sensuousness and the commitment to intellectualism. This way leads to the old prejudice against Poussin as, in his mature work, the painter of order, of the critical faculty, of the judging self. It is true that Poussin is these things, but he is also more. For in a residual but totally persistent fashion he is on the side of those very forces which he opposes: but is only through opposing them in the first instance that he finds himself able to ally himself with them.

which he groups his figures Poussin places himself by the side of Raphael; with his use of cropping, and the startling immediacy it gives to the action, he is the companion of Degas.

If there is a simple progression to which Poussin's early development conforms, there is nothing simple about its realization.

While he was in the camp of Colosseum Poussin admired Titian but a great deal separates the two men. Ruskin, who tried hard (as he often did with great artists) not to admire

ishment of content. In these pictures, represented in the present exhibition by the Elsmere "Moses Striking the Rock", Poussin set out to demonstrate how subjects that involved many characters in different moods and emotions could be realized without recourse to the favoured operations of baroque composition. In remaining within classicism, however, he radically reinterpreted it: he had no desire to go back, but even to stand still he had to invent. This particular phase is no more than the transient explicitness of one of Poussin's lasting concerns, for which over



A detail from Poussin's "The Triumph of David", c. 1630-31, from the exhibition reviewed here. The catalogue, by Hugh Macdonald and Hugh Brigstocke (124pp, 62 plates including 16 in colour, paperback only, 0 903148 38 2), is available from the National Gallery of Scotland, The Mound, Edinburgh EH2 2EL at £4.95 (£1.05 p and p) until the exhibition closes on December 13.

Poussin, wrote of him "Whatever he has done has been done better by Titian". It does not seem to have occurred to him that what they were trying to achieve was something very different. Titian's early work is permeated by the sense of mortality, but death is experienced as something that actually enhances life by asserting its fragility. In Poussin's art, by contrast, there is a more generalized sense of loss, even of resignation, which is diffused across the whole picture but especially in the lighting: dusk races on, or there is a threat that dawn will not break. If Poussin studied and admired Titian's work, his deeper affinities lay with the more withdrawn art of Giovanni Bellini, and it is just for this reason that it would be nice to think that the remarkable copy of Bellini's "Feast of the Gods" which was given to Edinburgh by Sir Charles Eastlake, was indeed by Poussin.

Nor, once Poussin had joined the camp of Dürer, was he in any conformist fashion a classicist. He retained acutely aware of the sacrifices that the new allegiance might call for and he was unprepared to make them. The frieze-like composition, which first emerges in "The Triumph of David" as an obvious alternative to baroque recession, regresses to the side of those very forces which he opposes: but is only through opposing them in the first instance that he finds himself able to ally himself with them.

visual fact that we have still to make sense of: Armida wears a mask-like visage, Rinaldo is enveloped in a kind of subaqueous sensuousness. It looks as though the very eroticism that reason tries to repress has returned to colour it, and that it is only under this colouring that it can finally vanquish sensuousness. In other words, having allegorized the victory of Rinaldo over Armida, Poussin would appear to take literally the fact that Rinaldo gains it through his beauty. Or consider the highly poetic National Gallery "Cephalus and Aurora", where a related drama, in which again duty defeats desire but only through an alliance with desire, is enacted. If Poussin is the painter of repression, he is also and visibly the painter of the return of the repressed, and it is just this dual sympathy that accounts for the depth and pathos of his work and makes him, in Hazlitt's words, "of all painters, the most poetical".

There is, however, no one single way in which Poussin allowed desire its second chance. In the "Bacchanals" executed for Cardinal Richelieu, where eroticism is celebrated directly, the result is emotionally least poignant. "The Triumph of Pan" is a heady work, particularly in its depiction of nature, and this exhibition provides a splendid occasion to see it cleaned, but the "Bacchanals", ultimately, are public paintings, and one effect of seeing the series is to become aware of the perils to which Poussin would have been exposed, had he returned permanently to France. In the Philadelphia "Triumph of Neptune", deliberately reminiscent of antique painting, there is a more roundabout disclosure of desire. It consists in a particular use of the background that is to become a poignant feature of Poussin's later work: as though behind the picture that is before us, beyond the scene that it represents, there is another picture, a further world, of effortless beauty. Desire gets modified or softened into yearning. A cliff in twilight, a grove of palm trees, a temple facade, often reflected in water, are used to express the sensuous, but as something put to one side or placed out of immediate reach. Poussin's backgrounds become like thoughts that rest at the back of the mind: tantalizing but not importunate.

In the second set of *Sacraments* Poussin gets beyond even this point; it seems as though sensuousness and eroticism no longer require any kind of segregation; they seep back right into the main body of the picture, where they remain subordinate to the overpowering gravity which the paintings are imbued. Details of brass ornament, food, drapery, architecture, flowers are at once solemn and sexual. Anyone who has peered through the left or the central aperture at the back of the "Mars and Venus" will have caught sight of one of the most remarkable and moving representations of human happiness: sunlight and carved stone, mysterious, momentary, with a fierce sense of place, to be seen only over someone's shoulder.

Chantelou, for whom this second set of *Sacraments* was painted, had curtains made for them and drew back only one at a time. Bartoli approved of the arrangement. Poussin is best not seen to excess. If he certainly needed this great Paris exhibition of 1960 with its 241 paintings, this is the exhibition that he would have liked. A minor query: Poussin has been fortunate in recent years in being studied by two of the most intelligent and creative minds engaged in art history: Anthony Blunt and Denis Mahon. Blunt's work is justly acknowledged in the catalogue, but why are the references to Mahon so scanty, particularly when, in the matters of chronology on which these two scholars divided, the catalogue notes tend to come down to Mahon's side?

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C. J. F. Williams

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commentary

A cisalpine romance

By Peter Conrad

La Sonaambula
Covent Garden

Though Bellini's operas now have a reputation for melodious fatuity, they make more sense dramatically than they're given credit for. Auden didn't help by making them a campy acma of good taste, declaring that "no gentleman dislikes Bellini": the joke lay in the prissy absurdity of the advocacy. Covent Garden has received *La Sonaambula* after the lapse of a decade, and in order to accommodate a favourite singer, Ileana Cotrubas, but, as it happens, the work is shown to be not only an occasion for innate vocal fanaticism, of which Cotrubas is anyway just capable of producing much. *La Sonaambula* is a case-history of romantic imagination, of its mental trances and its necessary credulity — a cisalpine answer to *Der Freischütz*, first performed ten years earlier, in 1821.

In that opera, Weber allies the romantic imagination with fearful hauntings and a prostrated, superstitious credulity; Bellini, less guilty about imagination's triffids with demons, has his own version of this credulity in the fables of the Swiss peasants about their local phantasm. The Count desires their folklore but capitulates to it when he mistakes the sleep-walking Amina for that itinerant village boy. In Weber's German forests, the imagination conjures up devils, but Bellini's spirits are benign, and a tribute to the trusting literalness of his rustic, who like Wordsworth's country people are unselfconscious romantics. The Count is willing to suspend his disbelief for a while, but analytically demolishes the vision when he instructs the villagers that Amina is a sleep-walker: they don't understand the term, and have to be told that it's compounded from the words for "and" and "dormir". All charms fly at this mere touch of frigid philology. Yet though his diagnosis undercuts the illusion, Amina's experience reinforces it. Her credulity is, as Kents specified it should be for the faith. She envisions something and, like Keats's Adam craving and thus generating Eve, cowers to find it true. Fantasy has the power to find actuality, to coerce creation. Having lost Elvino, in her second sleep-walking scene she dreams of her union with him, and when roused finds him there waiting to reclaim her.

In enacting the Count's medical hypothesis as she teeters about the mill-stream in her trance, she is also subtly repudiating it — for to the astonished villagers her somnambulism is as much a wonder and a mystery as the antics of their resident phantom, and she herself learns when she awakes, that imagination can alter reality and embody its own fond desires. *Der Freischütz* ends with the pious exorcism of the fiends which lurk in the romantic mind; *La Sonaambula* ends by pastorally placating them, investing them in the surrounding landscape as familiar tutelary gods, who will make the earth on which we live — as Amina sings — a paradise of love.

Filippo Sanjust's production theatrically exemplifies this same romantic state of credulity which saves Amina. His village is an angular succession of canvas flats, his alpine cyclorama has wrinkles like its crevices ought to be, and his waterfall is a story-book cut-out with stairs for the drops in the middle of its torrent; but these makeshift, approximate devices require us to trust them, and in doing so we supply them with their dimension by our own willing suspension of disbelief, the romantic disarming of reason which the theatre exists to effect. Visconti in his 1952 production demolished dramatic illusion in

order to double theatrical illusion, staging the work as a nineteenth-century performance of an opera, with Callas no sinpering rustic but a bejewelled prima donna. This self-complimenting irony wouldn't suit Ileana Cotrubas, who touchingly demonstrates Amina's simplicity and is thus able to validate her visionary gift — her capacity to make a thing just by singing about it, just as Keats said the imagination could gain its food by hungrily dreaming of it.

Though the more florid vocal antics sound hard and screechy from Cotrubas, in the sleep-walking monologues she is ideal, uttering the Bellinian *bel canto* as a vocal rance, a meditative reverie, an unending stream of sound on which the char-

acter floats towards a destination within herself. Robert Lloyd as the Count has the same vocal finesse, and for his character too the purpose of *bel canto* is visionary introspection and retrospection, the journey back into himself which — like Norma and Adalgisa in their duet of recollection, "Oh! rimembranza", in Bellini's greatest opera — he undertakes when, in "Vi rinvivo", he recognizes his natal landscape. The Elvino of Dennis O'Neill is blustering and un-stylish. The conductor in Bellini is the accompanist, not the leader, of these vocally self-mesmerized singers, and Manfred Ramin, the husband of Cotrubas, has the deference and tact to be expected from a consort. The production returns, with a new Amina, in July: it ought to be seen.

Speaking for themselves

By Stanley Wells

Trollius and Cressida
BBC TV

Terry Hands's production of *Trollius and Cressida* at the Aldwych earlier this year was accused, with some justice, of interpretative excess. The charge is not likely to be brought against Jonathan Miller's television version. The difference in approach is typified in the treatment of the Prologue. At the Aldwych it was spoken, in character, by Thersites, thus setting the tone for a production which took a generally satirical view of the play's characters and events. On television it is delivered by an unseen speaker, courtiously, monomously, with neither rhetoric nor passion.

Jonathan Miller's whole production is similarly dispassionate. It is dours, and out that circular outdoor space, to which familiarity is endearing, to this mere touch of frigid philology. Yet though his diagnosis undercuts the illusion, Amina's experience reinforces it. Her credulity is, as Kents specified it should be for the faith. She envisions something and, like Keats's Adam craving and thus generating Eve, cowers to find it true. Fantasy has the power to find actuality, to coerce creation. Having lost Elvino, in her second sleep-walking scene she dreams of her union with him, and when roused finds him there waiting to reclaim her.

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of pomposity. Some of the lesser figures are nicely touched in: Peter Whitbread brings Calchas to life as a slippery traitor, Anthony Pedley makes Ajax's stupidity touchingly credible. The central heroic conflict, between Achilles and Hector, is powerfully realized; Kenneth Haigh with Patroclus (Simon Carter), but John Shrapnell as an inactive, finely spoken Hector; his ignominious death, only partially shown, lacks the impact that it usually makes in the theatre; we are conscious of him finally rather as a victim than as a hero.

One source of the play's ambiguity is the number and variety of characters who comment rather than act. Much of its philosophic and poetic asides: Benjamin Whitrow falls to persuade us that his words spring from inner conviction; the verse is jerkily delivered, with an irritating attempt to suggest meaningfulness by misplaced pauses. But he listens sympathetically to Trollius.

The two other major commentators are more heavily characterized. Charles Gray brings to Pandarus every cliché in the book for the portrayal of an elderly queen. As if to toy with the links between them Thersites, too, is outrageous camp, a bald transvestite (Ajax does call him "Mistress Thersites"), doing Achilles' sewing and washing while chuntering criticism to himself, sharp-tongued but oddly suggesting a kind of compassion for the victims of his scurrility. The actor playing the role is known as The Incredible Orlando; it is bold casting, an ingenious way of ouelling the notion that Thersites presents the author's point of view.

The private values of this play centre on its title characters. Cressida has often seemed the more important, but Suzanne Burden, chastely beautiful, her hair in long chestnut ringlets, gives us nothing below the surface. A virginal Cressida is acceptable in the early scenes; but she must do more than this to convince us of her complex womanliness, her sensuous intelligence, and her passion. Trollius, for once, becomes a major figure. Anton Lesser, physically slight, looks no warrior, but his high tenor voice is controlled with imaginative expressiveness; there seems in him no gap between thought, emotion, and expression. He plays a Trollius who is wholly sympathetic (though not wholly admirable), an adolescent overwhelmed by love, shocked and embittered by disillusionment. It is a poignant portrayal which reaches the heart of the role.

I watched this production with interest and respect, but for me it does not convey that sense of the negotiating futility of war, the pathetic grandeur of the human challenge to evil, through heroism and love, of which (as Peter Hall's 1960 production supremely showed) the play is capable.

Bacon and the U.G.C.

By Stephen Fender

The House of Learning
BBC Radio

It is odd that the Anglo-Saxons, so rich in Nobel prizes, should be so poor at dramatizing intellectual pursuits in their normal setting of laboratory and library. In our literature and popular culture (always excepting the novels of John Banville) the excitement of discovery is displaced to the worlds of detective and spy, while intellectuals are reduced to comic-book figures of fun like Professor Branestawm and Doctor Sylvanus.

Martyn Wade's radio play is squarely in the tradition. It is about the last month in the life of Francis Bacon — not the author of the *Essays* and *The Advancement of Learning* who, according to Spent, "had the reputation of the whole ax-scholar in disgrace, sacked for corruption from the civil service, desperately trying to sort out the complex categories of *The Great Instauration* before he dies. His personal physician is none other than William Harvey, who has taken time off from discovering the circulation of the blood to give the old man a "check-up" and warn him against overdoing it. Harvey has little sympathy with Bacon's theoretical research, and besides, as he says, the smell of old parchment "gets up my nose". Bacon's chaplain and secretary, William Rawley, is even more contemptuous of his patron, evading his querulous calls for help in the library and making off with the girl-

friend of the local chicken farmer, after the last named has been pressed into service as an amanuensis. The farmer, by the way, turns out to have suggested the only practical experiment to emerge from this manic ivory tower (and the one that notoriously killed the old man with a chill), the preservation of poultry by stuffing it with snow.

Meanwhile, as a running gag, a foreign envoy called (I think) Salvador Jacinto Pollo de Medina keeps trying to get Bacon's attention in the vain assumption that he still has enough influence with the King to end the Spanish war. He exits in high dudgeon when Bacon takes him for "one of the capacious minds of Europe" anxious to finance his research.

It is all good fun, if a trifle untrue to history. Although Harvey did not do to history, Bacon as more of a lawyer than a scientist, the real Rawley held the scholar's memory in sufficient piety to write his biography, edit his unpublished work, and translate his English books into Latin. But history is not the object, of course. The real point is a satire on the universities of today (as the modern phrases and several references to "early retirement" make clear), a world of mad scientists avaricious for funding and insensitive to the needs of ordinary people like long-suffering wives, practical men and chicken farmers. Since Mr Wade is only updating a school-boy joke with the fashionable prejudice of the contemporary establishment, it is doubtful if his play works any better as a metaphor than it does as his Bacon and Nigel Hawthorne was suitably sinister as Rawley.

Among this week's contributors

KINOSLEY AMIS's most recent novel is *Russian Hide and Seek*, 1980.

HAROLD BRAVER is Reader in American Literature at the University of Warwick.

ALAN BALL's biography of Sydney Smith was published last year.

PHILIP COLLINS's books include *Dickens's Public Readings*, 1975, and *Dickens's David Copperfield*, 1977.PETER CONRAD's books include *Romantic Opera and Literary Form*, 1977, and *Imagining America*, 1980.DAN DAVIN's books include *Closing Times*, 1975.ANTHONY DELUIA's most recent book is a novel, *Border*, 1977.A. A. M. DUNCAN is the author of *Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom*, 1975.JOHN HOLLOWAY's collections of poems include *Wood and Windfall*, 1965, and *Planet of Winds*, 1977.SIMON JANKINS is political editor of the *Economist*.

DANIEL KARLIN is a lecturer in English at University College London.

J. P. KENYON's books include *Revolution: Principles*, 1977, and *Stuart England*, 1978.

JAMES KIRKPUP teaches Comparative Literature at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies.

STEPHEN KOS's *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*, Volume One: *The Nineteenth Century*, was published earlier this year.GORDON LEFF is the author of *Dissolution of the Medieval Outlook*, 1976.

PETER LEWIS is a lecturer in English Studies at the University of Durham.

GARETH B. MATTHEWS is the author of *Philosophy and the Young Child*, 1980.RICHARD MURPHY's *Selected Poems* was published last year.

IAN NISH is Professor of International History at the London School of Economics.

DAVID NOBES is a lecturer in English at King's College, London.

LORIS PARRY's books include *Hand To Mouth*, a collection of essays on literature published in September.MAXI RICHARD is preparing *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, with Humphrey Carpenter.JOHN RYLE's book *Worriors of the White Nile* will be published early next year.C. H. SISSON's translation of *The Divine Comedy* was published last year.FRANCIS SPALDING is the author of *Roger Fry: Art and Life*, 1980.

PETER STEIN is Regius Professor of Civil Law in the University of Cambridge.

R. L. STOREY's books include *Chronology of the Medieval World, 800 to 1491*, 1972.STEPHEN TROMBLEY's book *All That Summer She Was Mad: Virginia Woolf and her Doctors* will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

STANLEY WELLS is General Editor of the Oxford Shakespeare.

RICHARD WOLLHEIM is Grote Professor of Mind and Logic at University College London.

The Ethics of Abortion

Sir, — Peter Singer's notice of L. W. Sumner's *Abortion and Moral Theory* (October 30) presents an unfortunately narrow summary of the literature of the subject. The anthology *The Morality of Abortion: Legal and Historical Perspectives* (1970), *Abortion and Social Justice* (1972), and *New Perspectives on Human Abortion* (1981) come immediately to mind, and among single-author books Germain Grisez's *Abortion: The Myths, the Realities, and the Arguments* (1970) and John Noonan's *A Private Choice: Abortion in America in the Seventies* (1979) should not have been omitted.

Peter Singer says that the unborn child is "parasitic" on the mother. Whether this term is Sumner's or his own, it is inappropriate. In the technical sense a parasite is, among other things, a member of a different species than the host. In popular usage the term is an emotionally loaded pejorative.

The charge is frequently made that the right to life movement is trying to impose its moral, religious, or philosophical beliefs on society. Peter Singer's review shows that the charge applies to supporters of abortion. To say that not all living members of the human species are human persons, that one must meet additional criteria before one is acknowledged as a human being whose right to life is protected by law, is to promote a highly conjectural and dangerous philosophical view which the law currently imposes on society. Singer and Sumner say that full human status is achieved some time during pregnancy. Michael Tooley argues that it is achieved sometime after birth, thus justifying infanticide. (The increasing reports of infanticide in hospitals indicate that many physicians are putting this theory into practice.) The sanctity of human life should have a stronger safeguard than the competing theories of philosophers.

Who else transplanters were first performed there was general recognition of the need for accepted criteria defining death, so that one would not kill the donor by removing his heart while he was still alive. Removing the heart prematurely would be wrong, even though the prospective recipient would die if he did not receive a new heart promptly. The prospective donor does not have to prove that he is still alive. The surgeon bears the moral burden of proving that the prospective donor, who is unquestionably human, is no longer alive. Similarly the abortionist bears the moral burden of proving that the foetus, who is unquestionably alive, is not yet human. Anyone who operates in the absence of such proof demonstrates a willingness to kill an innocent human being.

MARTIN W. HELGESEN, 11 Lawrence Avenue, Malverne, New York 11565.

Transylvania and Gad's Hill

Sir, — Prince Cosma Albertus, concerning whom Patrick Leigh Fermor writes (Letters, November 13), is mentioned in the notes of Anthony Wood with the remark "was a cheat and no prince" (*The Life and Times of Anthony Wood*, ed. A. Clark, 5 vols, Oxford, 1891-1900). This supposition is rather confirmed by the fact that there is no reference to Cosma Albertus in the contemporary correspondence of Charles II's ministers. If Cosma Albertus had been a genuine exiled prince he would surely have sought some contact with the English government, whereas it was a fraud he would naturally have wished to avoid official investigation.

The information concerning Cosma Albertus given by G. H. Palmer in his *Rocheester: the Cathedral and the See* is probably derived from a

panphlet entitled *A true and exact relation of the... further lately committed upon Prince Cosma Albertus by his own anathemas, near Rochester in Kent, which is in the British Library.*

JOHN SCHELLENBERGER, 60 St Barnabas Road, Cambridge.

Military Drinking

Sir, — In tracing the origins of the Greek Symposium to military tradition, Oswyn Murray (November 6) notes the warmth with which Plato defends that tradition against Spartan puritanism. The Athenian in the *Laws* argues that young soldiers should be encouraged to drink in good company, partly to diagnose their behaviour under stress, and partly to learn a special sort of self-control. It would be helpful to know whether there is any sense in this argument, or whether Plato is merely rationalizing the indulgence of his youth. Sobriety would suit the close-order tactics of the Spartan phalanx, but could the more open methods of Athenian naval and amphibious operations have justified a different approach? The topic is as controversial today as it was in the 4th century, but that may be a further reason for asking those with relevant experience to record it.

P. H. BLYTH, University of London Institute of Education, Classical Studies Department, St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham TW1 4SX.

Prince Sapieha

Sir, — Both Peter Hebblethwaite and Jedrejz Gierczyński need a little correction on Cardinal Sapieha (Letters, October 16). He was called "Prince-Prince-Prince", (1) because he was born a Prince; (2) because he was Prince-Bishop (and since 1925 Prince-Archbishop) in virtue of an Imperial decision of Franz Joseph of 1889 by which the Bishops of Crocowa (part of the Austrian Monarchy since 1848) received the title of Prince; and (3) because he was Cardinal (and therefore Prince of the Church) since 1946.

It is not wrong to say that "even in the twentieth century his title [meaning n° 2] has not been abolished", but its use is discontinued (even for the present Prince-Primate of Hungary where it had a constitutional meaning until the present Republic's Constitution came into being) since Pope Pius XII asked all prelates whose sees have a title of nobility attached, not to use such titles. These secular titles were however never used by the Roman Curia, not even for those prelates within the Papal States who owed them to Papal grant, or, more generally, to Imperial grants.

To our knowledge, the only Bishop who should still use the title of "Co-Prince (of Andorra)" is the Bishop of Urgel in Spain, because he actually exercises some form of secular authority in the Principality of Andorra.

The last Archbishops who actually used the honorary title of "Prince-Archbishop" were, to our knowledge, Cardinal Mindszenty (rather "Prince-Primate" of Hungary), Archbishop Rohrer of Salzburg, and Archbishop de Ferrari of Trent.

The only countries where personal titles of nobility are used at present by ecclesiastics are Western Germany and the United Kingdom, where, until he died, Dom Peter Gilbey, OSE, was Lord Vaux of Harrowden.

LUDOVICO M. BONCOMPAGNI, Rome.

P. G. Wodehouse

Sir, — I recently, in a review in your columns of a book about some problems in the books of P. G. Wodehouse, made a thumping factual error, and apologized for it. But I must take up Stephen Medcalf on a point when he writes (Letters, November 13) "no one who attacks P. G. Wodehouse over the German broadcasting affair ever fails to make at least one thumping factual error..." and then goes on to correct a t.e. by your correspondent J. W. Bruegel.

Of Wodehouse's foolishness and innocence in the matter of the broadcasts I, in common with Wodehouse, his friend Townsend and Mr Medcalf, have no doubt. But I wish Wodehouse (in a letter published on May 8, 1946 in the American showbiz paper *Varley*) Townsend (in *Performing Flea*) and your correspondent Medcalf had not quoted that thing about the late Air-Marshal Boyd. Townsend quotes it from a letter (no date given) written to Wodehouse by one John Leeming (whom Wodehouse did not then know). In this letter Leeming said to Wodehouse: "I am personal assistant to Air-Marshal Boyd of the RAF and they had been partners of war together in Italy." "He [the Air-Marshal] read your broadcasts and gave them to me, saying 'Why the Germans ever let him say all this I cannot think...' Wodehouse has probably been shot by now..."

How did the Air-Marshal get scripts of Wodehouse's talks from Berlin in a POW camp in Italy? It is clear that William Connor had not read the BBC monitored transcripts of Wodehouse's first talks (they would have been available) when he attacked Wodehouse on the BBC radio for making them. When Major Cussen of MIS 31AE in late 1944 interrogated the Wodehouses in liberated Paris, Wodehouse had difficulty in providing him with scripts of all five of his Berlin talks. We in England had to wait until *Encounter* published texts of the talks in 1954 and the Penguin *Performing Flea* the same texts in 1961.

I repeat: how did the Air-Marshal and his PA (presumably an officer, as they were in the same camp) read them in Italy as prisoners of war? This point has always worried me. I think Townsend, Wodehouse and Medcalf missed it.

RICHARD USBORNE, Fenton House, Windmill Hill, London NW3 6RT.

The Uses of Obscurity

Sir, — To have one book reviewed by Peter Kemp is to have a misfortune befall me. I have now six together (November 13) is outrageous. Fired by his crusade against "the current trend" in criticism, he concocted a review which was not only flippant and superficial, but determined to make diverse books fit his prejudices.

I cannot speak for the other poor victims, but I cried with frustration when I read his crude misrepresentation of my own book *The Uses of Obscurity*. Where other reviewers have found in it a clearly written historical account of changes in the novel at the end of the nineteenth century, Kemp only finds what his whole review sets out to prove: that my book, like the others, is jargon-filled, theory-dominated and pays scant respect to the particularity of texts or authors. These assertions are simply false and I can only say that when Kemp accuses me of having to "warp the evidence to make it fit his case" he is describing his review and not my book.

To show that *The Uses of Obscurity* is jargon-ridden Kemp quotes a sentence with a difficult German word in it which he misspells, also omitting the second half of my sentence in which I supply a translation.

'The Day of the Triffids'

Sir, — T. A. Shippey, reviewing *The Day of the Triffids*, BBC TV (November 6), writes that "The Midwich Cuckoos ends with Gordon Zerkby intoning *Si fieris Romae, Romani vivito more* (subjunctive and all)..." *Vivito* is imperative and *fieri* is here surely a future perfect indicative.

JOHN GORNALL, Moss Cottage, Tattenhall, nr Chester.

'Images of Chelsea'

Sir, — Bumber Gascogne (Letters, November 6) ignores the author criticisms of his book contained in my review (February 20), and concentrates instead on minor points relating to the catalogue section. Alas, he chooses the wrong hairs to split. His list of etchings by Roussel is not infallible: "The Little Barge", and even "The Window Cleaner", have just as much — or just as little — topographical content as "Pleasure Boats" or "Events Over the Railings". Moreover, I am not as unacquainted with the print collections of the Ashmolean and the Bodleian as he seems to believe. The following items should certainly have been included in Mr Ditchburn's catalogue:

Bodleian: R. English, "View of HM's Royal Hospital of Chelsea" (c 1730), Gough Maps, vol XVII, ff 29v-30r, with accompanying garden plan, f 31r; "Chelsea Bridge" (published by C. Dacey, late 18th century), vol XVII, f 33v; E. Oakley, "Garden House, Physic Garden" (c 1732), Gough Gen. Top., vol LXII, f 15; and variant states of Ditchburn nos 252 (s and d 1739), 319, 515 in Gough Maps, vol XVII, II 34r, 36v, 35r.

Ashmolean: From the Hope Collection: J. Savage, "Chelsea Parochial Schools" (c 1824); "Chelsea Hospital" (large woodcut, c 1850); "Chelsea Hospital" (six wood engravings, 1856); and variant states of Ditchburn nos 24, 49, 203 (published 1776) providing earlier states of 199 and 201. From the Sutherland Clarendon: variant state of Ditchburn 30 (C.II, 51).

These are not trivial additions. The print of Chelsea Hospital after R. English is more than twice as large as any print listed in *Images of Chelsea*. As to the remainder of Gascogne's letter, I decline to comment on his use of private — and partly facetious — correspondence.

J. MORDAUNT CROOK, 55 Gloucester Avenue, London NW1.

FOREIGNERS

The Making of American Literature, 1900-1940

by MARCUS KLEIN

Around the turn of the century there was cultural chaos in America, caused by industrialization, urbanization, the rise of corporate business, institutionalized political corruption and mass immigration. Klein is concerned in *Foreigners* with the consequences for literature. He deals with Eliot, Hemingway, Gertrude Stein and other masters of the "modernist" movement... with ethnic literature, proletarian writings, detective fiction, documentaries, critical studies and poems... and he finds that the significant literature is the creation of those who felt themselves to be marginal Americans, whether by birthright or by an act of the imagination. Published November, £12.00.

CHICAGO

The University of Chicago Press, 128 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 6SD



on kinship, lordship and the feud as a "force for peace" are found in a very fine setting. She likes James IV who, she thinks, was popular, while James V was not, a simplistic judgement (who counted the votes?) which contrasts with her sophisticated analysis of their patronage of the arts and their greedy management of the Scottish church.

I cannot do full justice to her account of the reforming of the church. It will not please those who believe reform was God's will or Knox's doing, or both; indeed it will not please those who believe reform was all about the state of the church, and in particular the failings of bishops and of the parochial clergy. For Dr Wormald has struck out on her own, taking the reforming acts of the kirk, Catholic and then Protestant, at their face value to stress the centrality of faith, and the necessities of Catholic teaching in contrast to the "mutant aggressive Calvinist" offering. She is rightly scornful about historians' concern with the struggle of the reform kirk for the Kirk's resources - ministers were well paid, Knox parish-nismers were well paid, Knox parish-nismers were well paid. It is arguable that once in the saddle the Reformation Kirk could have divided parish revenue between minister and schoolmaster more equitably, without danger to the soul of either and with considerable benefit to the young scholars of the parish.

Perhaps the best part of a very good book is the commentary upon Scotland in the time of James VI. There is

an excellent discussion of the economy using the few statistics available on population, price rises and the fall in real wages, a contrast with rather uncritical acceptance of bullionist ideas for earlier times, esp. that Elizabeth "rescued" England from "severe economic straits". Again the administrative structures and social mores of the local communities are nicely balanced by the cultural achievements of the royal court. I dissent from Dr Wormald's judgment that the innards were not interested in a long ancestry but preferred to stress their origin as stewards, to the bishops (not counts - see Barrow) of Dol and then to the Scottish kings. I know of no acknowledgment of their Breton origin; Banquo and Ptolemy, however, were part of a work of imagination presented as a history of a Scottish kingdom older than the empire of Rome, a pseudo-Livy "history" which captured the patronage of James V and pleased James VI well enough.

Dr Wormald is surely right to stress the claims which Scottish society made in this period upon European culture, though I doubt if she is right to contrast Scotland with England in this regard. Indeed if her Scotland seems needlessly prickly, complacent or pompous about its achievements and strident in its demand for recognition, that may be about right. This Scotland was in Europe as a small, pushy, poor, peripheral but participating nation; Dr Wormald tells it like it was, and is the more interesting and successful for doing so.

Squaring rules with reason

By Peter Stein

JAMES, VISCOUNT STAIR:
The Institutions of the Law of Scotland
Edited by David M. Walker
1186pp. Edinburgh University Press.
£40.
0 85224 399 9

Scottish nationhood is based on two distinctive institutions, the Scots Kirk and the Scots Law, and when the Treaty of Union with England of 1707 was negotiated, the Scots insisted that their continued existence be safeguarded. Scots have tended to look on both of them as not only showing their difference from the English but also as reflecting their particular national characteristics. Whereas English law is regarded as technical, obscure and bedevilled by antiquarian formalities, Scots law is perceived as rational, coherent and oriented towards principle rather than precedent. In the nineteenth century much of Scots law was assimilated to English law, often as a result of the supine attitudes of

fellow-travelling Scots lawyers themselves. But such claims as the modern Scots law has to conform to the ideal are largely the result of the exposition it received in a single work, Lord Stair's *Institutions*, published in 1681. The tercentenary of its publication is an appropriate occasion for a new edition.

The work appeared at a vital moment in the history of Scots law, a quarter of a century before the Union. It was intended, in the first place, to provide an authoritative account of the whole of Scots law, then a disparate mass of customary rules, precedents and statutes, stitched together with strips of Roman law. Sir Edward Coke had done something similar for English law in his *Institutes* about half a century earlier. Both Coke and Stair wrote with enormous authority and in both cases their exposition almost obliterated any need to consult the older authorities. But there the resemblance ends. As Maitland put it, Coke "shows off his enormous learning in vast, disorderly heaps". For Stair, form was as important as substance. He wanted to write not only a compendium of the established rules of Scots law but also to demonstrate how those rules formed a rational and coherent system. When Coke spoke of reason, he meant an artificial reason which was peculiar to the English common law. For Stair, reason indicated the principles of natural law, as publicized by Grotius and the Protestant natural law writers of the Continent.

Coke wrote exclusively for his fellow lawyers, and would not have expected his work to be read by those outside the craft. Stair wanted his book to be not only profitable to lawyers, but also "pleasant and useful to all persons of honour and discretion". Although there are undoubtedly some passages that a gentleman would have found tough going, on the whole he succeeded in producing a work of literature as well as of law.

These differences were due partly to the period in which Stair wrote (he was an older contemporary of John Locke), partly to the international attitude of Scots lawyers to their profession (prospective members of the Scottish Bar customarily attended the law faculties of the Netherlands universities), and partly to the character of Stair himself. Like Coke he was deeply engaged in the public affairs of his country, as well as in legal practice, but unlike Coke he was also interested in branches of learning other than the law.

James Dalrymple, created first Viscount of Stair in 1690, was born in 1619 into a family of Ayrshire gentry. Between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, he followed the arts course at Glasgow University, graduating first in his class. He began to prepare himself for the law but was diverted to join the army of the National Covenant, formed to defend Protestant principles against Charles I's Prayer Book. Then, instead of returning immediately to the law, he served for six years as a Regent at Glasgow University, responsible for guiding a group of students through the whole of the arts curriculum. In 1648 he was finally admitted to the Faculty of Advocates and began to practise at the Bar. But he retained his extra-legal interests and nearly forty years later, while in exile in the Netherlands, he published an admittedly rather old-fashioned treatise on experimental philosophy based on the Ptolemaic idea that the earth is the centre of the universe.

Although, like other leading advocates, Dalrymple refused to take the oath of allegiance to Cromwell, he was nonetheless made a judge under the Protectorate, and when the Court of Session was re-established as Scotland's Supreme Court after the Restoration of Charles II, he became one of its members. In 1663 he resigned rather than admit that the National Covenant was an unlawful oath, but six months later an accommodation was reached with the government and he was re-admitted.

He had already decided to remedy the deficiencies of Scottish legal literature in two ways. First, he began to collect reports of the judicial decisions of the Court of Session, especially with a view to publication. There were several manuscripts "practicks" in circulation, but these were fragmentary collections giving only brief accounts of decisions, mixed with procedural hints for the practitioner. Dalrymple wanted to show, by full reports, the reasoning behind the decisions. Secondly, he began his institutional exposition of the law, and manuscripts of his early drafts were in existence in the early 1660s.

In 1671 he was made Lord President of the Court of Session. At the same time he extended his activities outside the court by becoming a member of the Privy Council, which was effectively the government of Scotland and also entered Parliament as Commissioner for Wigtownshire. In 1681 he published the first edition of his *Institutions*, observing in the dedication to Charles II that, until then, "my modesty did not permit me to publish it, lest it be justly cited, where I sat". In the same year he refused to take the oath under the Test Act, required by the Royal Commissioner, the future James VII and II, and fled to the Netherlands. There he adhered to the cause of William of Orange and in 1688 sailed to England with William, who restored him to his office.

Stair was probably not a very happy man; his wife was said to be a witch and his daughter was the model for Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor*. He was violently attacked for complicity in governmental oppression and for partiality on the bench, and in a public defence observed that he had three times given up his office on issues of principle. He was indeed a man of principles, but one who usually managed to find a way of accommodating them to the needs of his career. In an age of extreme views he was a man of moderate temperament, and it is this moderation which provides the key to the success of the *Institutions*.

The sources of Scots law were in a new and Stair wanted to show that underlying the apparent muddle was a system based on principles, which were recognizably those shared by the civilized nations of Europe. Yet he assiduously cited the existing authorities for every rule, so that the practitioner's needs were served.

Particularly in the law of contract he was able to integrate a relatively small number of decisions into an elegant scheme of rules, derived from the Roman civil law, which was much more suited to the needs of a nascent commercial society than the contemporary English law. As he himself said it,

There is not much here asserted upon mere authority, or imposed for no other reason, but *quia moribus placuit*; but the rational motives, inductive of the several laws and customs, are there held forth. And though the application of those common rules to the variety of cases determined by our statutes, our ancient customs, and the more recent decisions of our supreme courts be peculiar to us; yet even the quadrate of these to the common maxims of reason and justice may make them the same speaking, and that no nation hath so few words of art, but that almost all our terms are near the common and vulgar acceptance.

Since its publication, Stair's *Institutions* has been constantly cited in Scotland but seldom elsewhere. It has been edited three times since Stair's death, most recently in 1932, but the editors took liberties with the text. The new edition of 1981, the text of the original edition of 1681, provides modern references to the citations of authorities, an informative introduction and, especially, a full index in a work of this kind, a new and comprehensive index. The edition is presented in a format worthy of the occasion.

Families and their followings

By R. L. Storey

JOHN GILLINGHAM:
The Wars of the Roses
Peace and Conflict in Fifteenth-Century England
274pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£12.50.
0 297 77630 4
ANTHONY GOODMAN:
The Wars of the Roses
Military Activity and English Society, 1452-97
394pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£12.55.
0 7100 0728 0

"The Wars of the Roses were, militarily speaking, only a skin eruption on the surface of English life... a period of social disorder which gave rise at intervals to spurts of real warfare." Before G. M. Trevelyan expressed this opinion in 1942, two outstanding specialists on Lancastrian England, C. L. Kingsford and K. B. MacFarlane, had initiated a reappraisal of the customary portrayal of the period as a time of unremitting anarchy, and laid responsibility for the occasional trials of armed strength on a few great lords thus reluctantly attempting to gain more effective influence in the government of whoever was king at each particular stage.

After a decade of increasingly violent swings of political fortune, the "Yorkists" finally resorted to making Edward IV king in 1461, and nine years later Warwick "the kingmaker" restored Henry VI, again as the last option for securing his own ascendancy. The political nation which had accepted and served Edward IV in his "second reign" (1471-83) turned to Henry Tudor, after his promise to marry Edward's eldest daughter, in order to overthrow the intolerable regime of the usurper Richard III. Experience had taught that rebellion could be legitimized, and its gains best underwritten, by transferring the crown to another head, and with it the sole right to

exercise the government of the realm.

Subsequent tradition bestowed a recognition of unity on this series of battles and depositions. Sir Walter Scott may have coined the term "Wars of the Roses", but by 1515, according to Polydore Vergil, the common people spoke of the two major factions as the roses, "because the white rose was the emblem of one family and the red rose that of the other." Their kingly ambitions were blamed as the basic cause of England's miseries through "inward war and trouble, unrighteousness, shedding of effusion of innocent blood" and countless other kinds of tribulation, all alleged to have begun with the usurpation of Henry of Lancaster in 1399 and his murder of Richard II.

Edward IV's assertion of his title in parliament in 1461 launched this myth of the blood-stained history of fifteenth-century England. It also suited the interests of the Tudors to remind their subjects of this grim and recent example of divine punishment of a rebellious people. As John Gillingham points out, the invention of printing and royal censorship facilitated this use of history as propaganda. He is by no means performing an original service, however, in "shattering" the historical credibility of the subject of E. M. W. Tillyard's *Shakespeare's History Plays* (1944). Indeed another generation earlier, in 1913, Kingsford had commented on the effect of Shakespeare's historical plays in forming popular opinion on the fifteenth century and thus immortalizing the official Tudor mythology.

Gillingham's refreshing account will please readers who want a plain introduction to his subject; it has good, well-chosen illustrations, and is not burdened with a substantial apparatus of reference, with little use of record evidence. In contrast, Anthony Goodman's scholarly work draws on most available sources of information, among them manuscripts in local record offices; nor is he a newcomer to the study of late medieval England. This learning is

put to good effect, with an easy touch, and his appraisal of military strategy and tactics suggests that he has some familiarity with the works of Liddell Hart and so appears to regard Edward IV as the Rommel of his day.

The authors' subtitles illumine their opposed analyses. To Gillingham, fifteenth-century England was a country at peace, its people unaccustomed and unprepared for warfare, the short-term, mostly amateur soldiers set upon each other at the earliest opportunity, the sooner to return to their daily affairs and cease vexing the non-combatant general populace. Certainly the inland south and the midlands had no cause to expect devastation by foreign enemies, and had not continental Europe's need to keep their towns fortified and castles in good repair. The decay of fortifications in this part of England, however, particularly those of towns, should also be related to the decline of population and urban industry consequent to the demographic disasters of the fourteenth century and the still endemic plague. It is notable that two of England's most flourishing late medieval centres, London and Coventry, had defences able to repel attack in 1470. It is less remarkable that Carlisle and Newcastle-upon-Tyne could ward off incursions from Scotland, or that Gloucester barred the Severn crossing.

To support his thesis that English society was well behaved, Gillingham dismisses evidence drawn from judicial proceedings on the plausible grounds that these records naturally report unlawful acts and that it is impossible to compare the level of violence in the fifteenth century with that in other periods. The Paston Letters are, unfortunately, a unique survival from this time, but the perils they report were widely encountered. National judicial records, indeed, suggest that the Pastons' East Angles was one of England's quieter backwaters.

The amount of crime by individual miscreants is not the point at issue in this argument. What is significant in

the law-court material of Henry VI's later years is the high social standing of many accused of unlawful conduct, and the large numbers of followers who aided them. It can hardly be considered just coincidence that the first battles of Lancaster and York followed a dozen years when the recognized leaders of county societies, the same men who were commissioned to keep the peace in their shires, led armed gangs in violent pursuit of personal disputes. In 1450 the House of Commons warned Henry VI that the peace and prosperity of the realm were being jeopardized by his failure to provide justice. The ending of civil warfare was likewise not simply due to Henry VII's victories at Bosworth and Stoke-Newark, but owed much to his vigilance and expeditious firmness in curbing riotous gentry; while the nobility was cowed by his exemplary severity.

Both authors rebut a recent notion projected by W. H. Dunham that the total amount of active campaigning between 1455 and 1487 came to only thirteen weeks; Goodman calculates that there were at least 428 days when substantial military forces were on the move, although few campaigns lasted beyond three weeks in all those thirty-two years. Most modern specialists have further tended to assert that this sporadic warfare was localized, rarely affected the civilian population in its vicinity, and left the greater part of the country unscathed. One possible exception was the march on London by the "Lancastrian" host early in 1461, although "Yorkist" propaganda probably exaggerated depredations by north-countrymen in order to enlist support in the south.

More extensively, however, Goodman shows that there must have been some dislocation to the course of daily life in much of England. When armies were formed, their cores were the personal followings of the royal protagonists. Their principal fighting strength was supplied by sympathetic, or obedient, nobles who brought their hired companies of household men and retainers

knight and gentry; both lords and retainers were followed by many tenants of their estates, many of whom would therefore be classed as "yeomen". In addition, the king could require town and county communities to provide contingents. The scale of such recruitment can only be illustrated by chance survivals in borough and private archives. A muster-roll made at Bridport, Dorset, showed that the town could produce 180 men variously armed. The accounts of several towns show payments for wages and for equipping their companies; thus in 1455 Coventry spent 38s. 6d. on sashes for its 100 archers, a jazzy outfit for their captain, and a tattered banner.

Apart from such locally paid expenses, towns and villages were obviously deprived, perhaps for some weeks, of the presence and labour of their war-bound menfolk. Then these companies had to march to appointed assembly points, from the south coast to Yorkshire, for instance, or from Norfolk to besiege castles in Northumberland; problems of their supply and behaviour would mark their routes. The military value of civic and rustic levies may have been slight, but the economic and social consequences of their enlistment cannot be ignored. Moreover, by thus tapping "civilian" sources of manpower, the king gave a wider public direct interest in his political difficulties and doubtless ensured widespread desire for an end to the conflict of royalist factions.

Aa volume 24 in a new series, the Devon and Cornwall Record Society has published *The Accounts and Fabric of Exeter Cathedral, 1279-1333: Part I: 1279-1326* (212pp, £8. 0 901853 24 0; available from the Assistant Secretary, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 7 The Close, Exeter). In her introduction, the editor, Audrey M. Erskine, outlines the background and the form of the accounts, and also provides information on the fabric fund and a note on translation. The text of the accounts is supplemented with wages lists and an appendix on defective wages lists.

Escaping to the heather

By Lachlan Mackinnon

JENNI CALDER (Editor):
Stevenson and Victorian Scotland
141pp. Edinburgh University Press. £5.
0 85224 399 5

In her introduction to this symposium, Jenni Calder says rightly that "problems of language and style account in part for the evasive critical rejections that Stevenson's work has generated for over a century. Ultimately, before a complete assessment of his achievement can be made, this will have to be explored more closely." She stresses also the closeness between Stevenson's life and his work, and it is on the life and its background that most of the contributors focus.

David Dalziel offers an account of Stevenson's Scotland as a confluence of opposites, "Bohemianism and Calvinism, Art and Morality, the City and the Country". Michael Ballou describes the shenanigans which surrounded the writing of the first biography, while Trevor Royle looks at literary Edinburgh, "a shadow of its former self", as Stevenson experienced it. Royle's account is packed with fact, and is an extremely useful introduction to the period. Christopher Harvie looks at Stevenson's politics, which he finds to be "authoritarian but - unlike Kipling - feudal and familial rather than technocratic".

All these contributions are informative about their chosen specialties, but they fail to bring us any closer to a full view of Stevenson. The limitations of the biographical approach are most plainly apparent in L. C. Furness's "Stevenson and Exile", which tells us both about Stevenson's illness (probably bronchitis) and about the ways in which his sensibility profited from migration. The conclusion reached is both far and, it seems, accidentally revelatory. Furness says of Stevenson's exile that "A return of any duration risked a clattering up with details and petty memories of the staidier, grayer, gautier, windier Edinburgh that, in certain emotional weather, he saw out of his work-room window overlooking the Firth." To suggest that Stevenson saw his background as a castle in the air is extremely plausible. Stevenson's real life was those of a charming fantasist, as is implicit in W. W. Rostock's insistence about *Memories* that "there is no more sustained account of a physical ordeal in the literature." The book's evasive problems, however, it is the point of

the novel's Lowland-Highland, romantic-practical, vanity-pride distinctions, which holds the imagination. Stevenson's writing is at its best when it quits the moral world of the Appin murder for the contingent, chancy world of the flight, which is a fantasist's release and which wins us precisely by its fantastic plausibility. Stevenson appeals to a primitive, mythic layer of the imagination with unusual power, but there is in his work a central evasiveness which calls up an answering evasiveness in his critics.

Douglas Gifford's re-reading of *The Master of Ballantrae* takes us further towards the truth. He proposes that we should take Ephraim Mackellar with more salt than is usual, pointing to the unsubstantiated vilifications of the Master which infiltrate his narrative. Gifford suggests that Mackellar is structurally mirrored by Secundus Duss as a confluence of loyal shadows who are unable to avert a crisis which is essentially inward and psychological. Mackellar is also set against the Chevalier Burke, whose florid, self-aggrandizing narrative is of the opposite kind to his own but whose presence reminds us to be chary of even the most honest-seeming witness. Gifford finds *The Master of Ballantrae* powerful because of its structural complexity, and thinks it offers a more shaded moral view than the innocent reader supposes.

Gifford's account is ingenious and likeable: it is the kind of respectful attention we instinctively want to give Stevenson. We want the machinery of *The Master* to work, and we want this because of the Master himself. James is by far the most exciting figure in the book - not attractive, but engaging. He grips imagination, and reason wants

With the appearance of *Scottish Methodism in the Early Victorian Period: The Scottish Correspondence of the Rev. James Bunting, 1800-57* (Edinburgh University Press, £8. 0 85224 412 5) the publication of the Bunting correspondence, which intermittently has occupied more than a century, is now complete. Bunting, four times President of Conference, the "Methodist Pope" dominated Wesleyan Methodism from the 1820s to the 1840s, at a time when the connection was under severe pressure from Free Methodist secessionists ready to challenge Bunting's dictum that "Methodism was as opposed to democracy as it was to sin." These conflicts are well brought out by the editors, A. J. Hayes and D. A. Gowland. In their introduction, and they offer, too, a succinct account of the precarious condition of Scottish Methodism during this period. The letters to Bunting

him to be morally complex and interesting, mistrustful of the aesthetic appeal of his surface and reluctant to cede all response to that. Just so, Stevenson's own hold on our mythic imagination makes us wish him complex and rewarding in the way other novelists are.

Stevenson himself would have been pleased to be read in this way, but the process is in this way, too. *The Master of Ballantrae* does not emerge as more interesting in itself, and Gifford's relation of it to a Scottish literary context proposes the wrong kind of interest. The reason why *The Master* remains unsatisfactory is formal: Stevenson never makes it fully clear whether his language itself is to be seen as transparent or obstructive, and this fatal indecision is what leaves Mackellar's role dubious. Stevenson is almost Melville's peer in striking deep, intuitive imaginative responses, but he does not have Melville's wholly informing intelligence. For instance, those who defend *Weir of Hermiston* (not discussed at length in this book) cite the great confrontation between Archie and his father, but the tensions set up in that scene had already been dissipated by the idyl with young Kirstie before Stevenson died. In the end, Archie's father seems to have been cast as the tragic relief to a romance and, though both parts of the book are enthralling, their tension devalues the serious issues raised in the great scene.

Stevenson's ultimate lack of seriousness - "Some of his contemporaries noted that he lacked rigorous intellectual application", Jenni Calder reminds us - is what leaves the status of his work perennially baffling, and it is a pity that this enjoyable book spends so much time on the man, so little on his writing.

ing from hard-pressed ministers and superintendents alike, document the financial struggles of districts burdened with heavy debts and grandiose building schemes. The correspondence shows Bunting struggling to bring some kind of order to this chaos, while at the same time he was engaged with the major issue of relations with the newly seceded Free Church of Scotland. One or two letters to Thomas Chalmers reveal Bunting's friendly, if cautious, approach, but on the whole the value of this collection is to be found in the detailed picture it provides of the mundane difficulties of bringing the Methodist message to the reluctant Scots. "You ask me Religion in Scotland?" wrote Thomas Preston in 1801. "Both are very low. Very little of the power of Godliness is known among them."

J. K. W.

Practically prelatical

By Gordon Leff

KATHERINE WALSH:
A Fourteenth-Century Scholar and Prelate
Richard FitzRalph in Oxford, Avignon and Armagh
518pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £25.
0 19 822637 3

The scholar-prelate was one of the phenomena of the later Middle Ages. If he bore little resemblance to a Platonic philosopher-king, he was nevertheless pre-eminent in the affairs of both kings and church during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He belonged to that comparatively recent cadre of university-educated men, trained in philosophy, theology and above all law, to be found in the upper reaches of both temporal and spiritual society, and among the popes themselves. The modern traffic from academia to public life can show nothing to its medieval counterpart.

Richard FitzRalph (c 1300-1360) was a striking example of the breed. Although not an outstanding thinker, and in his later years at variance with both the king of England and the mendicant friars, he was nevertheless one of the most prominent figures in both university and church. His reputation spread throughout Europe, continuing after his death, albeit distorted by his mistaken association with Wyclif. FitzRalph is also perhaps the most revealing figure of the period in pointing to the dilemmas which learning and religion were taking in the comparative calm

before the outbreak of the Great Schism. This is less because his career is an unusually well-documented one for a man of his time, than because of its many facets. In addition to the normal change from an academic milieu - in his case Oxford, where he was also chancellor from 1332 to 1334 during the great secession to Stamford - to an active life as an ecclesiastic, first as dean of Lichfield and then as archbishop of Armagh, FitzRalph also spent a total of twelve years in the papal court at Avignon. This gave him an unimpeachable perspective involving him in the great issues of the day, notably the controversy over the beatific vision and the efforts at reunion of the Greek and Latin churches; it also led him to contribute his own issue in his last years, over the legitimacy of the mendicant orders.

Ireland and Avignon therefore provided him with a perspective from both the periphery and the centre of the church which took him beyond the more conventional confines. The range of his experience is manifested in that of his writings and sermons, from the early scholastic commentaries and questions of his academic phase to the anti-mendicant polemics of his last period, with the discussion of the beatific vision and his dialogue with the Armenians, the latter belonging to the time of his first two visits to Avignon between 1334 and 1344. There was an accompanying change in outlook, from the abstract to the practical, with the earlier attention devoted to secular learning displaced by theological truth founded on scripture, and the violence of his hostility to the friars was prompted by his attempts

at reform in Ireland; he came to see them as usurpers of clerical rights, in particular confession, the friars' abuse of which, he believed, contributed to the lawlessness he was combating. His pastoral experience thus turned the friars from erstwhile colleagues and companions, at Oxford and on his earlier visits to Avignon, into bitter enemies whose suppression he sought towards the end of his life.

FitzRalph, then, hardly conformed to a stereotype. Perhaps of all academic prelates of the time he came closest to trying to bridge the gap between precept and practice, the hierarchy and the faithful. He succeeded no better than anyone else. But in making the effort he also mirrored the reasons inherent in his failure. In his sermons he painted the ideal of the priest whose life lay with his flock, teaching, ministering and preaching to them; that entailed personal probity, residence in his diocese or parish, attainment of office by merit not nepotism, and lack of involvement in unnecessary litigation. Yet FitzRalph, consummate preacher to both the lowly and the learned, as his unique sermon diary testifies, opposed to all such abuses, one who sought as archbishop of Armagh to bring order and justice to his own province, was himself guilty of some of those very failings: he spent only six of his fourteen years at Armagh actually in Armagh and twelve in litigation at Avignon; in a system where advancement could normally only come through patronage he secured benefices for his nephews. He had good reasons in both cases: but so, no doubt, had many others. There was an insuperable division in the later medieval church between precept and practice which all the preaching

in the world could not surmount. The very obsession with preaching, becoming an end in itself - in the later Middle Ages only accentuated it in pointing to the gulf.

The same divide between ideal and reality can be seen in FitzRalph's doctrine of dominion and grace: although he was not its originator, and Wyclif was to take its implications much further, FitzRalph gave it its definitive stamp, and applied it to disqualify the friars from any jurisdiction. That, in the context of the time, was as practically unattainable as the doctrine's premise, that grace alone justified the exercise of authority and ownership, was unverifiable. It is a measure of FitzRalph's standing at the papal court that, despite the outcry which greeted its appearance in his treatise on Christ's poverty, he was able to present his case there, and even preach before the Pope. The issue, though, remained unresolved at his death, and lapsed with it. Unlike Wyclif, who died in seclusion, FitzRalph was never condemned. Any similarities between them, even over the concept of dominion and grace, were superficial. FitzRalph never extended the concept beyond the friars: his concerns were practical and limited, actuated by conservatism rather than radicalism.

Even the most cursory account of FitzRalph's career shows its singularity. He is one of the few individuals of the epoch who comes to life, and the pioneering studies of Aubrey Gwynn have helped to achieve that. Anyone taking FitzRalph as his subject begins with that asset, to say nothing of Gwynn's proverbial generosity and encouragement, which Katherine Walsh gracefully acknowledges in her dedication of her book to him. Her work is a

lifting completion of his. She has produced a comprehensive biography of FitzRalph as scholar and ecclesiastic and set him within a European context of the intellectual and ecclesiastical life of the time. This has involved her not only in a thorough re-examination of all the material concerning FitzRalph's life and works but also their milieu and the events to which they belonged. Although she does not attempt a systematic exposition of his thought, she brings coherence to its different phases and establishes many missing connections, especially at Oxford and Avignon. Her full account of the controversy surrounding John XXII's pronouncement on the beatific vision, which explains FitzRalph's own questions on the subject, will be especially welcomed. Indeed one of the great strengths of the book is its European and ecumenical perspective, but Dr Walsh also treats FitzRalph's time at Lichfield and Armagh thoroughly and illuminatingly. She has no difficulty, or reservation, in showing his inconsistencies of thought and impetuosity in action; and she is particularly critical of the confusions in his treatise on Christ's poverty.

Incidentally, in a work of such comprehensive scope she has had to cover much familiar ground, and sometimes she falters, as in her discussion of Franciscan poverty. But the total effect is of a considerable work, meticulous in its detail, with an admirable grasp of the whole and unfailingly fair and balanced in its judgments. It is as nearly definitive a study as anyone can hope to achieve in a field where so much remains unexplored. But whatever may come to light, it is highly improbable that the main lines of what she has written will need to be written again.

The comedian and his concepts

By Peter Conrad

ALICE GOLDFARB MARQUIS:
Marcel Duchamp: Eros, c'est la vie
A Biography
475pp. New York: Whitston, \$22.50.
0 87875 187 4

Duchamp remains the most vexatious problem in modern art, and estimations of him vary extravagantly. He has been called the Leonardo of our century, an engineer of the imagination for whom art is invention not slavish depiction. In her valuable and conscientious biography Alice Goldfarb Marquis considers him to be more intellectually intrepid than Picasso, who after flirting with "eristic abandon" in "Les Femmes d'Alger" retreated at once into decorative conservatism, leaving the future interrogation of limits and possibilities to Duchamp. But Duchamp can also be considered a sterile spoiler. His persona is the nihilistic one of the practical joker, whose announcement of his presence ends the game. After his renunciation of art in 1923, Duchamp's formal ingenuity degenerated into acrid jesting. He prided himself on his failure by contending that to be an artist it was no longer necessary to bother to manufacture works of art, and thereby begot a progeny of tireless performers and poseurs.

Duchamp began by questioning the conventional assumptions of pictorial art, and in doing so he learned a dandified contempt for the art he was investigating. Abandoning art for chess and imaginative conjecture for the consoling automatism of breathing, he spent the remainder of his life contriving justifications for his loss of faith. Marquis suspects that his demolition of an art he called materialistic and merely perceptual was the angry product of his own incompetence: she notices his difficulties with pictorial representation in his 1910 portrait of his father. His jokes, like the perverse epigrams in Wilde's preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, initially expound an ironic, agnostic catechism, disputing sacred commonplaces. But Duchamp's chosen method of criticism was the derisive trivialization of his own endeavours, and his adversarial position eventually required him to profess indifference to and disbelief in art, which was after all (he declared in 1961) only a "habit-forming drug". He is an aesthete who defrauds himself in the process of negating art.

Each of Duchamp's jokes proposes an aesthetic contradiction, which the fatigue implicit in his disparagement tempts him to leave unresolved. For instance, there is apparently a penetrating wit to his description of painting as mundane manual labour and his wish to end this physical servitude by placing art "at the service of the mind". He explained his own decision to become a painter as an act of exemption. He wanted "social freedom; one doesn't want to go to the office every day". His jibe attacks a romantic aesthetic which describes the painter as an athlete who rejoices in the use of his body whereas the writer's occupation (as in Hazlitt's contrast of the two professions) is sedentary and housebound, and also impugns the later nineteenth-century notion of the artist as a captain of industry, a tycoon, a tireless and heroic manufacturer. Duchamp's flippancy is profound and unsettling, but it leaves him nowhere to go except ahead into bored retirement. His humour is a dead end, an undialectical arrest to thought. Though Duchamp's aim was the conversion of art from mimesis to conceptual experiment, he was not intellectually energetic enough to avoid the impasse this projects. Comedy is his stylish reconciliation of himself to defeat – the reflex of his lassitude, the mind's nonchalant shrug.

He succumbs too easily to the contradiction which his wit exposes, and vows to spend his life in idle respiration ("my art would be that of living; each second, each breath is a work which is inscribed nowhere"). This martyrdom, to principle is by no

means necessary. His successor Robert Rauschenberg has manoeuvred an exit from Duchamp's self-imposed incarceration and self-motivated silence. Rather than posing, as Duchamp did, an antithesis between the toil of art and the idyllic bliss of life ("I like living, breathing, hence than working"), Rauschenberg precisely measures the gap dividing art from life and chooses to act, as he has said, in the disputed space between them. What Matta Echmureu called Duchamp's "beautiful gestures" were semaphores expressing disdain and exclusion; Rauschenberg's actions – scavenging in urban gutters for flotsam from which to fabricate art – are enthusiastic incorporations, encouraging life to invade art. His impulse was to rescue Duchamp's objects from their proud isolation, win them back from art to life; when he saw "Why Not Sneeze?" at Philadelphia in 1954 he couldn't resist reaching into the bird-cage to handle one of the marble sugar lumps. The museum guard who warned him off made his own Rauschenbergian statement by defining the object as junk, life's discard, not art's precious and hermetic treasure: "Don't you know you're not supposed to touch that crap?" he barked.

For Duchamp himself, the border between art and life is crossed only at the price of destruction. He derived a sour pleasure from the shattering of his glass painting "The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bothersome, even". Cracked, he said, the glass now belonged again to "this world". In breaking it had shamefully re-materialized itself, collapsed from concept – what he called "brain-fact" ("cervelle") – into an ownable, accident-prone, untrustworthy thing. By affecting to enjoy the catastrophe, Duchamp was able to deprive art of all confidence in its segregation from the mess of life.

In irrational paths

by Frances Spalding

ROLAND PENROSE:

Scrap Book
1900-1981
299pp. Thames and Hudson, £18.
0 500 23344 6

Preferring images to words, Sir Roland Penrose, has chosen to present his life as a scrapbook. The text merely provides a framework on which to hang almost 700 photographs which document his friends, travels, art, exhibitions and books. This disparate collection is rather like the curiosity cabinets – illustrated here – in his London and Sussex homes, filled with figurines, relics, fetishes, ornaments and masks culled from various centuries and countries, as well as shells, bones, snakeskins and coloured sand. His fascination with such collections began when he was a child in his grandfather's home, where he was forbidden to touch the curiosities kept locked away. These Victorian collections made an unforgettable impact on him, and no doubt began his love of the exotic and bizarre. Like the glass in a cabinet preserving objects from the hands of a child, Penrose's ingenuously appears to make everything visible when in fact it protects much.

His aim is in any case not to expose inner motives but to celebrate friendships and the role played by chance. "In early days chance was surprisingly generous in mundane affairs," he begins disarmingly, making light of the well-oiled machinery of his upper-middle-class Edwardian background. It was not until he crossed the Channel in the autumn of 1922 that he was able to slough off the restrictions of his Quaker upbringing. Through his friendship with the Greek painter Yanko Vardas, he was introduced to a Mediterranean and more sensual

life. But again his humour conceals non-sensitiveness in his thinking. Where had the glass been, he was asked, before it returned to "this world" in smelted form? Duchamp's response, as Marquis reports it, was another of his evasive metaphysical shrugs: he "threw up his hands and laughed".

Sometimes, as in his discussion of the etiquette which severs art from life, Duchamp glibly acquiesces in his own contradictions; at other times, he seems annoyed by the position in which he has trapped himself, and to long for the freedom to contradict himself. This is how his debate about the relation between artistic and financial value ends. Duchamp's campaign against the correspondence between art and material reality criticizes the transformation of aesthetic merit into monetary credit. For him, it's both an error of taste and a moral failing to cross-breed art with life in this way. His mother, he said, "painted still lifes and wanted to cook them too". She preposterously confused art with all that is material, and he despised the cupidity of her greed for the esthetic integrity of the Dadaists, but, according to John Cage, Duchamp was "extremely interested in money", and envied the incomes of Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg.

It was the sad fate of Duchamp's concepts to dwindle into paltry and futile conceits. Just as his wit is an elegant admission of his arrival at a dead end, acknowledging the encroachment of a silence which is his self-punishment, so his machines are all exercises in frustration – the masturbatory frenzy of his bachelors, putatively the opposite one, abstinent and penitential. Drunk in the insane rotation of his demisphere, sending a nonsensical slogan into orbit; the visual terminus of his occluded window, punningly associated with emotional deprivation, in any these people because worldly

things mean nothing to them". He paid his debts with a Dadaist pun on this couple of art and money, handing a cheque to be drawn on "The Teeth's Loan and Trust Co., Consolidated, 2 Wall St."

But twenty years later he repented of the joke and reneged on his own demonstration of art's impropriety in masquerading as a medium of exchange: he repurchased the cheque from the dentist, and complained that he now had to pay "a lot more than it says it's worth". Though Duchamp alleged that disgust with the commercialism of the art market had persuaded him to abdicate in 1923, Miss Marquis's research reveals him to have been a shrewd trafficker in the commodities of others, buying pictures as Walter Arensberg's agent, and an astute trustee of his own artistic wares, advising Katherine Dreier to charge a fee when loaning his "Anemic Cinema" to a museum while fastidiously pretending to find the matter "very unimportant". He despised the cupidity of her greed for the esthetic integrity of the Dadaists, but, according to John Cage, Duchamp was "extremely interested in money", and envied the incomes of Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg.

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of life. At Cassis, he tells us, "Venus emerged daily from the blue water". Chance brought to his doorstep the Gascon poet Valentine Boud, whom he soon after married. She became for him "a goddess of the irrational, of intuition, of feminine mystery", and, in keeping with such a role, eventually moved out of his life and into oriental philosophy. He, meanwhile, met and subsequently married the beautiful Lee Miller, a former assistant to Man Ray. Her photographic skills add considerably to the fascination of this book.

The author admits to little guiding power other than good fortune. The chance of a studio brought him into contact with the artist Ernest, who with Ernst introduced him to the Surrealists. Nevertheless, most Englishmen of his background would have needed more than openness to chance to court the barbed humour of these men. Penrose does admit that the Quaker belief in "inner light" enabled him to accept the import given by the Surrealists to the unconscious. His own thinking had meanwhile brought him to the conclusion that "whereas the annihilation of good would mean chaos, the cessation of evil would produce stulticity". The Surrealist's "irrational poetry of evil lies in its inexorable presence." He was therefore sympathetic to Max Ernst's caustic black humour and to the Surrealists' belief that disparate realities could be reconciled. In turn, this movement, with its emphasis on unshackled imagination, opened for him a gate to creativity; the mind could now dart unimpededly and irrationally in any direction.

Returning to London in 1935, Penrose found that he missed the richly creative atmosphere in which he had lived in Paris, and decided that if he could not always have such friends around him, he would have their works. This began his "Scrap Book", the collection that collected itself. In 1938 Paul Eluard, in need of money, sold to Penrose six Chirico, ten

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"Fresh Widow"; the splintered deer baring any access except the voyeuristic to the landscape of sexual delirium in "Etant Donnés". Even the snow shovel which he found in a Broadway hardware store and promoted as an art-work is inscribed as an aid to human incapacity, a meek prosthesis: "In advance of the broken arm". Though his art is ludic, its games are not elaborations of new possibilities but – like "Fresh Widow" – logical denials, closures of vistas. His choice of chess as an evocation was psychologically right. The patterned board with its strict quota of ritualized moves, "a narrow, black-and-white one-way street" as Stefan Zweig describes it, is Duchamp's ideal habitation, a cerebral asylum.

Alice Marquis is perceptive about Duchamp's deliberate self-examination, and speculates intriguingly about his transvestite countenancing of his identity in the bronze figure of Rose Selavy. This alter ego allowed him to disown his physical vitality and delight in life, by transposing them to an ill-believed harlequin. With Rose as his accomplice and surrogate, Duchamp himself could aspire to nonentity, existing in what Anais Nin thought of as a prematurely postmortem state of "complete immobility". His two marriages were conceptual ventures, parables of nullity and frustration. He tormented his first wife (who fled after the honeymoon) by sitting up all night cogitating over the chess board, and declared that he had selected her successor because she was too old to have children. "I personally never wanted to have any," he explained, "simply to keep with parsimony in a cruel image of that bored and depleted zero-degree condition of insensitivity to which Duchamp also sought to reduce art."

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"Dado and Surrealism Reviewed" in 1978, part of which he helped select, he felt uneasy; a formerly comfortable art was being comfortably received. Comparing the show with the 1936 exhibition, he sensed some blunting of the sword: "the ardent desire to extend consciousness and create a society both richer in spirit and more equitable to all has become more rare. The ineluctable difference between the two exhibitions was that the first came about as an urgent necessity created by a living force, whereas the second was little more than the applause of distant spectators."

It is a pity that Penrose's belief in irrational solutions has not directed the format of this book. It is the straight-backed cousin of his illustrated scrapbook, pages of which are illustrated here, and lacks the Surrealists' love of buffoonery. The images are not flung about with the love of unexpected and poetic juxtapositions that is found in his collages. The present-day text jars with the old photographs, and one wishes that more period letters and documents had been included to lighten the scrapbook effect. Though he decries the importance of evil, he liberally omits painful subjects, and people he disliked. He is too kind to himself and to others, and reader is left wanting to know more about Valentine, Lee Miller, and the third of Penrose's loves, the trapeze artist Diane Deriaz; about the Surrealist relationships with the Surrealists; about the "ride of barbarism" that caused his resignation from the Presidency of the ICA. But the author is more interested in fortuitous alignments and gratuitous events than reason and logic; for him myth is ultimately more important than knowledge. He therefore plays his secrets without explanation, and this tantalizing book is one to come, be pored over for years to come, exhibiting as it does a truly fortunate life and one dedicated to a belief in the healing vigour of the arts.

By way of fiction

By Dan Davin

PATRICK WHITE:

Flaws in the Glass
A Self-Portrait
260pp. Cape, £7.95.
0 224 02934 X

Patrick White is perhaps the most considerable novelist now writing in English, and *Flaws in the Glass* is an honest and brilliantly successful attempt to tell us something of the amount of unaided inference from the novels themselves would provide about how he came to be the man he is and the writer he is. It emerges that the writer is a sort of Hegelian synthesis created in much suffering from the contradictions in the man.

White was born in England, of wealthy parents who had themselves been brought up in both the simplicities and the complex snobberies of the late nineteenth-century Australian squatterocracy. He was at school – unhappily – first in Australia and later in England. He read French and German at Cambridge and, after returning to Australia, escaped once more to England and London. Finding himself hardly less uneasy there than he had been at home, he strove to emancipate himself from the conventional expectations of his family and the general Australian ambience of that time. The Second World War, in which he served mainly in the Middle East as an RAF Intelligence Officer, provided only a temporary respite during his expatriate oscillations and, afterwards, he opted for Australia, drawn by his love of its landscapes rather than for any identification with its then culture or its people.

The first section, however, could stand by itself if necessary. In it, though an intensely private man – as a schoolboy, "I didn't share secrets with anybody" – and almost morbidly sensitive to any kind of intrusion, he has somehow constrained himself to write about his life, feelings, background, qualities, with the same ruthless candour that he would bring to bear on a character in one of his novels. So *Flaws in the Glass* reads about this to the century in which he lives – a century which he not altogether unjustly tends to despise as a period of plastic values and moral anarchy. Still, at no other time in the Christian era would he have been able to come out so frankly:

Sexual ambivalence helped drive me in on myself. Lacking flamboyance, cursed with reserve, I chose fiction, or more likely I was chosen for me, as the means of introducing to a disbelieving audience the cast of contradictory characters of which I am composed.

But *Flaws in the Glass* is not an *apologia pro vita sua*; it is not written to defend any part of White's character or behaviour but rather to explain them and to reveal the forces which animate him as man and as artist. It is a cunningly reticulated network of memories, analysis and narrative, superficially arbitrary in their sequence and apparently arising from an almost random nexus of associations, but in fact profoundly composed so as to throw light forward and backward, like a torch in the hand of a man groping through the night of time past and into a future whose terrifying darkness is endurable only to those who, in growing old, have learnt the wisdom to love and to go on seeking for some kind of faith, even though they can find no established creed to command their allegiance.

Irresistible to any reader curious about the writer of the novels or in search of help in finding their deepest meaning, the book is daunting, intimidating even, to a reviewer. For it has long been plain that White is impatient of critics who wish to dissect him in the manner of anatomists with a cadaver, and of admirers whose praise may be so clumsy or underestimating as to arouse his resentment, rather than his gratitude. Of course his feelings are exposed and acute, he tends to react more sharply to pain than pleasure, and he responds

combatively to rash misunderstanding.

Flaws in the Glass is divided into three sections, of which the latter two are supporting panels to the main portrait. First, there is the section which gives the whole book its title. This is followed by "Journeys"; and that in its turn by "Episodes and Epitaphs". The first section contains the main substance, is the most tightly organized and, in spite of flashbacks and projections forward, presents the essence of the autobiography, the principal outlines of the portrait. It constitutes three-fifths of the whole book and the other two sections are complementary to it rather than essential.

"Journeys" is a series of vivid recollections and glimpses of the Aegean islands, Greece, the fringes of Anatolia, and Egyptian Alexandria. These places are important to White, not only because they were the backdrop to most of his wartime life but because they are the background to the family and early life of Manley Lascaris, first met by White in Alexandria in 1941 and eventually to become the other half of a lifelong relationship, a double mandala, in which White found, for the first time and permanently, an escape from the promiscuity which so often mars the homosexual life. With Lascaris White found also the love and trust which he had long sought and which gave him the emotional security from which all his great post-war novels have come.

The third and shortest section, "Episodes and Epitaphs", is another series of brilliant pieces, this time of condensed and fiercely lit sketches of life in Australia and its relationships there.

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Whatever the answer to that question, the reviewer of *Flaws in the Glass* will find that its author is always a jump ahead of him and knows his way better than any invader about his own minefield. Thus one concludes that in reading White one must always read between the lines for the richer meaning and a moment later finds him writing of "a belief contained less in what is said than the silences". Again, about to remark on the acuteness of his senses and their greater vulnerability to pain than to pleasure, one comes across "my memory began evoking scenes rather than scenes". Or else, "Unfortunately or not, I was given eyes, hyperactive emotions, and an unconscious apt to take over from me". Or one might be about to hint at certain evidences of vanity and one finds White writing, "Of course I am vain, less since losing my teeth, and to some extent my vision", a sentence which outruns reproach and

undercuts with typical irony its own assertion.

This irony, and its subtlety, make one wary of accepting White's statements at face value. Thus he more than once proclaims himself unable to forgive and exhibits a distressing harshness, especially about his mother, Maud. Yet, monster though she in many ways seems to have been, there is something in the obliquity with which he presents her at her worst that nonetheless brings out her ultimate humanity and which makes one feel that at a deeper level of understanding and sensibility, the artist's level, he has forgiven her even if his memory has not.

The man who emerges, then, knows himself better than anyone else can – something which is far from true of all of us and is able to see that his own woes are part of the common human condition. In childhood, he soon realized that he was a cuckoo in his parents' nest, a freak, a changeling, someone unable to pardon or to accept pardon, someone

Hanging out the hang-ups

By Harold Beaver

JAY LANDESMAN AND G. LEGMAN:

Neurotica, 1948-1951
The Authentic Voice of the Beat Generation
544pp. Jay Landeman, £15.
0 905150 260

Neurotica was a postwar phenomenon. This magazine ran for nine numbers from 1948 to 1951. Published in St. Louis, Missouri, it moved with the fifth issue to New York. Its message to readers was this: your anxieties and hang-ups are all defensive ploys; it is society that is intolerable; it is society that is warped; it is not the individual but society that is sick; join us; we need your help; we need you to explain our neurotic culture from within. An editorial in 1949 explained:

We define neurosis as the defensive activities of normal individuals against abnormal environments. We assume that human beings are born non-neurotic, and are neuroticized later. We do not agree that it is the measure of social intelligence and psychiatric health to adapt to, and milieusize for, every enemy. We do not subscribe to the psychosomatic fashion of throwing the gun on the corpse and the blame on the victim.

Neurotica was to be for the patients. In *Neurotica* American culture would hear its own authentic voice.

At least two things were new: the suggestion of mass participation by the lonely, the loony, the fetishist, or dirty mac; brigade; and the adaptation of psychiatric and anthropological disciplines to mass consumption. The aim was to build a bridge between the literary magazine and the pulp, between the university seminars and SoHo. It was an age of outsiders and inviolable and underground men. The great strip-show, the great coming-out party was about to begin.

It began tentatively enough with poems by Kenneth Patchen, Henri Michaux (translated by Malcolm Cowley) and Leonard Bernstein. There was a clinical piece entitled "Why American Homosexuals Marry" and some touching, tingling prose by the contributing editor, Richard Rubenstein:

I walk along the quay, beneath the low scudal moon that nudges my green corduroy coat. It is warm – a pervasive whiff of sea air mingles with the sickeningly sweet smell of my armpits. I am exhilarated, the sweat, the heat, the water dripping my ankles. I watch the muffled ships: they seem to pass be-

one "with an instinctive need to protect my creative self from intrusion and abuse". He accepted his homosexuality: "I was chosen as it were, and soon accepted the fact of my homosexuality.... I had begun the inevitably painful search for the twin who might bring a softer light to bear on my bleakly illuminated darkness.... I badly wanted to love someone." That someone at last found he could more securely continue his way towards being a writer, not always certain at first that what he was trying to express was his vanity or the truth he sought inside the glass, itself flawed, or the reality on either side of the mirror. "I suppose," he remarks of his beginnings, "I've indulged myself by tricking myself out in words. Not all ornamentation. Part of it is austere enough to have conveyed the truth, I like to think, but that again could be vanity. If I believe this today, tomorrow I feel that truth is the property of silence – at any rate the silences filling the space between words, and never these I sometimes have control."

Such surrealist smug Freud, or "sengfreud", was to mark much of the fiction. "Green armpits poetry" it was called: Children play in her green armpits. Apart from them, she combs her hair With a vermillion comb, and weeps. She speaks to her glass childhood....

But neither the poetry nor the fiction was *Neurotica*'s strong suit. Though the subtitle to this reprint now trumpets its claim to present the "voice of the Beat Generation", the main contributors were neither belligerent nor to be beatified. Nothing by Kerouac and only one little jingle by Allen Ginsberg was ever printed. "Pope my parts," sang Ginsberg, "Pop my pot, Pops my pap, Pops my plum." Not that drugs were an issue either, nor homosexuality exactly. The translation of Genet and a laudatory article in *Parliament Review* were regarded with the sourest suspicion. Even the publication of *Directions*, of Ronald Firbank, Words like "degenerates" and "bona fide pervers" tended to fly around. Pseudonymism was the name of the game, particularly in the popular arts: in comics, thrillers, graffiti, jazz. That is where the value of *Neurotica* now lies. Gershon Legman, who contributed "The Psychopathology of the Comic", an anatomy of murder mysteries, of science fiction, and dirty jokes, eventually took over the editing of the ninth and final number. "With rare exceptions," he wrote,

every child in America who was six years old in 1938 has by now absorbed an absolute minimum of eighteen thousand pictorial beatings, shootings, stranglings, blood-puddles, and torturings-to-death, from comic (ha-ha) books alone, identifying himself – unless he is a complete masochist – with the heroic beater, shooter, strangler, blood-letter, and/or torturer in every case.

He listed a treasure trove of some 120 Crime Comics and 160 Love Comics on sale in the drugstores of the USA between 1937 and 1949. Often they seem interchangeable: *Three Love* (formerly *Western Killers*); *My Private Life* (formerly *Murder Inc.*); *My Love Memoirs* (formerly *Women Outlaws*). A murky cartoon, mocking Kinsey, displays the "basic cause of all neurosis in father's tight-fitting jockstrap".

John del Torto contributed a piece on gambling; John Goldston, on chains and girls in knee-high boots; Marshall McLuhan, on "The Psychopathology of Time & Life"; a preview of "The Mechanical Bride". The sexuality of Wild Bill Hickok and "his Lesbian side-kick, Calamity Jane" were ridiculed; the anti-Semitism as well as the "obvious faggotry" of Superman, exposed. No holds were barred in those pre-Eisenhower years. But it was the next generation that was to reap the

With acceptance and experience there came at length some calm and solace:

I see myself not so much a homosexual as a mind possessed by the spirit of man or woman according to actual situations or the characters I became in my writing.... I don't set myself up as an intellectual. What drives me is sensual, emotional, instinctive. At the same I like to think creative reason rears me in as I reach the edge of disaster.

These scraps and fragments from *Flaws in the Glass* only suggest something of its quality, the density of its feeling. Resisting the temptation to make a mosaic of the sayings that White expresses as probably, let one last quotation bring us back to the recurring motif of the title's flawed glass or the flaws in what it reveals: "... this face in the glass which has spent a lifetime searching for what it believes, but can never prove to be, the truth. A face consumed by wondering whether truth can be the worst destroyer of all."

harvest after literary censorship was finally abandoned (with the failure of the fuss over *Naked Lunch*, 1958-66, and *Tropic of Cancer*, 1962-64). Not only the Beats, but the confessional poets, pop lyricists like Dylan and New Journalismists like Tom Wolfe, were *Neurotica*'s heirs.

Its most remarkable contribution to mass participation was a heax such as Poe (that wily editor) would have appreciated. Among the personal small ads this spoof was planted:

STRAPPING young woman interested in works of Marquis de Sade would meet young man interested in Soether-Masoch. Stat height and weight. Box 124.

Replies flooded in from Dallas, the Bronx, Annapolis, Hollywood, Akron, Gary, Quebec. The largest number came from Washington, DC. G. Legman, in exposing the prank, explained:

By one of those coincidences that life is full of, though novelists now avoid them as "melodrama", one of the other classified ads in *NEUROTICA* 4 turned out to be the perfect control. Box 119 was an ad from a California "YOUNGSTER" looking for a "domineering, mature female".

His forwarding address, a p.o. box, had lapsed, and his envelope of answers – it was assumed that no one could get hurt but himself if they were sent him – came back unclaimed. They were opened, dead-letter style, to find the return addresses of the "domineering, mature females" – who turned out to be (five of the six of them) same male masochists who had answered the Strapping Young Woman. The sixth was from a female masochist.

This confusion of alternate sadist and masochist fantasies, this scrambling of male and female roles, was perfect grist to *Neurotica*'s mill. But "The Degenerates' Corner" was discontinued. Maybe they suspected post-office decoys by this time or had been approached by the police. Yet here too they were forerunners, not only of the extraordinarily widespread SM scene in America today, but of the open soliciting in high-brow literary journals like *The New York Review of Books*.

As part of their Critical Essays on American Literature series, the Boston publishers G. K. Hall have now issued *Critical Essays on Thomas Pynchon* (258pp, \$25, 0 8161 8320 1). The editor Richard Pearce has assembled more than a dozen major articles on Pynchon by critics who include Thomas Sotah, Richard Pearce and Elaine B. Safer, to which he has added fresh material by Marcus Smith and Khachig Topyan on "The New Jerusalem: *Gravity's Rainbow*" and a critical bibliography of Pynchon criticism by Beverly Lyon Clark and Caryn Fuoroli.

The tradition of suffering

By Peter Lewis

ANATOLI RYBAKOV:
Heavy Sand
Translated from the Russian by
Harold Shukman
381pp. Allen Lane. £7.95.
0 7139 1343 6
ELIE WISSEL:
The Testament
Translated from the French by Ma-
rion Wiesel
346pp. Allen Lane. £5.95.
0 7139 1429 7

These long and important novels about Soviet Jews in the first half of this century make a fascinating and mutually illuminating pair. Both novels are strongly rooted in historical actuality, yet they are, of necessity, imaginative reconstructions of experiences which for the most part were denied expression at the time. The resemblances between the two novels are, however, superficial when compared to the major differences in viewpoint and underlying ideology. Anatoli Rybakov, a much respected Russian novelist, writes from a fundamentally pro-Soviet position, despite his criticism of some features of the system, and celebrates the Jewish community he writes about as an integral part of Soviet life. Elie Wisel, who writes in French but now lives in the United States where he is Andrew Milson Professor at Boston University, writes from a strongly pro-Jewish and pro-Israeli position, takes a very sceptical view of Soviet communism, and diagnoses an irreconcilable conflict between the Jew and the Communist.

In 1978 *Heavy Sand* caused a sensation in the Soviet Union when it appeared serially in three issues of the monthly *October*. Considering the very long history of Russian and Ukrainian antisemitism, Rybakov's extremely sympathetic presentation of a Jewish community in the Ukraine from the turn of the century until its extermination by the Nazis was most unusual, especially as he emphasizes the integration of the Jews into the mainstream of Soviet life after the Revolution of 1917 and the end of Tsarist containment of the Jews within the Pale. Yet what really aroused interest in the book was Rybakov's hunting documentation of the almost unimaginable suffering inflicted on the Jews by the Germans, and of the courage and heroism of the Jews in resisting their oppressors and in participating in the guerrilla war waged by Soviet partisans. From a Western point of view, it may seem odd that a work of literature dealing with the Holocaust and related themes should have come as a surprise in 1978, but Russian writers, while pouring out material about the Patriotic War of 1941-5, have shied away from the uniquely terrible Jewish experience of that time for domestic political reasons (including Stalinist and post-Stalinist antisemitism). In *Heavy Sand* Rybakov clearly sets out to right a very obvious wrong, even though this involves him in the extraordinary political contortion of countering Soviet antisemitism while apparently denying its existence in the book itself; and his didactic intention is manifest in the narrator's occasional direct address to the reader:

"You don't know them? I see you're not very well informed, but then, who is? The whole thing has become an academic subject. And that's all wrong! This is a lesson of history that should be taught to schoolchildren."

The narrator, Boris Ivanovsky, looking back on the past from the vantage point of the 1970s, reconstructs the history of his family in the half-century before its almost total extermination during the Second World War, drawing on a mixture of personal family and communal memory. The narrative style is colloquial and informal, giving the impression that the narrator is speaking to the reader and trying to organize his recollections as he goes. Sometimes he asks questions, sometimes he corrects himself. Rybakov employs this narrative intimacy skillfully to draw the reader into sympathy with what is, for his Russian audience, an unfamiliar point of view, and into seeing history through Jewish eyes.

The early part of the novel concentrates on the romantic courtship and marriage of the narrator's parents, a strongly matched yet utterly devoted pair, Jacob (Yakov) Ivanovsky, from a professional family in Switzerland which had converted to Christianity, and Rachel Rakhlenko, the daughter of a bootmaker in the Chernigov province of Russia, where they eventually settle. Rybakov then widens his scope to include a complex network of relations and friends, in order to build up a portrait of an entire provincial community against the background of a rapidly changing social, political, and economic order. Revolution, Civil War, Five Year Plans, collectivization of the kulaks, the purges of the 1930s, the Second World War: he treats a number of these events obliquely (some might say evasively), preferring to keep his main group of Jewish figures at the centre of attention, but there is nothing oblique or evasive in his handling of the Nazi persecution of the Jews. This occupies the final third of the book, and Rybakov, like his narrator, who was not an eye-witness since he was serving elsewhere with the Red Army, draws on the testimony of the few survivors. The ghetto which the Germans establish and then annihilate is typical of many in the occupied zone of the Soviet Union in 1941, and the chronicle of routine barbarity is convincing. Rybakov depicts the way in which the Nazis translated the widest

Gothic nightmares and Boschian fantasies into well-ordered mundane reality; the unthinkable became the everyday. But *Heavy Sand* is not just about passive suffering in the face of evil; it is also a tribute to Jewish heroism and self-sacrifice in impossible circumstances. Furthermore, Rybakov presents the Jewish agony as an extreme form of national suffering, again identifying the Jewish community as an integral part of the Soviet state. *Heavy Sand* may leave itself open to political criticism on some grounds, but at heart it is a profoundly humanistic novel in the great tradition of Russian literature.

While Rybakov concentrates on a representative group, Elie Wisel in *The Testament* isolates a representative individual: Paltiel Kossower, a Jewish poet. As in *Heavy Sand*, the main narrative roves the first half of this century, but again the events of the past are viewed from the perspective of the 1970s. The historical trigger for Wisel's novel was Stalin's horrific "liquidation" in August 1952 of all the leading Jewish writers and artists in the Soviet Union, an event shrouded in great secrecy. Since virtually no records of this extermination were kept, it is as though the Jews involved simply vanished from the face of the earth on the same day, leaving no trace of their prison experiences, interrogations, or deaths. In *The Testament*, Wisel provides these victims of Stalin's barbarity with the voice they were deprived of.

The core of the novel is the long autobiographical testament which Paltiel Kossower is tricked into writing after his arrest, a record of his personal and political life from his early childhood in pre-Revolutionary

Russia to the time of the 1952 purge. This testament is framed by and interspersed with other material, including examples of Kossower's poetry, an explanation of the testament itself was saved from oblivion and brought to Israel, and a treatment of the childhood of Kossower's symbolically mute son in the Soviet Union and his subsequent life in Israel in the 1970s. Wisel establishes the Israeli context in the opening words of the book, and the sustained polarity between the Soviet Union and Israel is crucially important since it corresponds to Kossower's own loyalties and commitments as he tries to clarify his own identity.

Whereas Rybakov in *Heavy Sand* systematically plays down the importance of religion in Jewish life, Wisel establishes the centrality of religion in the life of the Kossower family and of the Russian Jewish community into which Paltiel is born. One of his first inescapable memories is of an antisemitic pogrom involving wholesale slaughter, destruction and desecration, and this establishes a fundamental opposition between Jews and Russians which resurfaces in the Stalinist terror in which Kossower dies. Yet much of Kossower's life is spent as a dedicated communist working on behalf of the Soviet Union. His account of how he gradually abandoned Judaism for communism is particularly intriguing, since his "conversion" is more than a transference of faith; part of the appeal of communism is that it seems to offer a short cut to the goals of Judaism itself, a radical acceleration of God's slow processes.

Kossower's nomadic existence as a wandering Jewish communist encapsulates a great deal of the Euro-

pean as well as the Jewish experience of his times: Berlin in the 1920s and the rise of Hitler; Paris and Palestine in the 1930s; the Stalinist purges; the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, the Holocaust. But running parallel with historical and political events are Kossower's inner crises as he has doubts about his acquired faith, only to paper over the cracks again and again in order to give the crumbling structure the semblance of stability. What he finally recognizes is that he has committed himself to "spilt religion" (to use T. E. Hulme's definition of romanticism), and has betrayed his Jewishness and his true self. His testament, a posthumous reassertion of the faith of his youth. Faced with death, he finds himself. Wisel's novel contains tragedy, but finally transcends the tragic in its affirmation of new possibilities: Kossower's testament records the past, but also points to the future, to the Promised Land.

Winter's Tales 27, edited by Edward Leeson (1980pp. Macmillan. £5.95. 0 333 31072 1) contains stories by new and established writers: "Letting the Birds Go Free", by Philip Oakes; "Things", by V.S. Pritchett; "Old Tom", by Celia Dale; "Flora's Lane Duck", by Harold Acton; "Safe Wintering", by Terence Wheeler; "The Indian Girl", by Giles Gordon; "A Mouthful of Gold" ("macabre and surprising"), by John Brunner; "Home Ownership", by Murray Ball; "Chemistry", by Graham Swift; "Egnaro", by M. John Harrison; "Birth-day", by Fay Weldon; and "Christmas with a Stranger" (a "humorous and touching fairy-tale") by Leslie Thomas.

The voices of sickness

By Idris Parry

AHARON APPELFELD:
Badenheim 1939
Translated by Dalya Bilu
148pp. J. M. Dent. £4.95.
0 460 04548 2

This fine short novel is the first of Aharon Appelfeld's books to appear in English, translated from the original Hebrew in an easily flowing version by Dalya Bilu. The story begins in the season which started the disintegration of Mann's tragic hero in *Death in Venice*: "Spring returned to Badenheim." The simplicity of this statement sets off a movement which leads to disaster. Visitors are arriving for the summer at this small Austrian resort. The impresario Dr Pappenheim has come as usual to organize the music festival. The musicians make their appearance. Other regulars arrive; the hotel comes to life again. The historian Professor Fussoldt has a much younger wife who is in despair because he spends so much time correcting proofs. The resort's two prostitutes get ready for an active season. Among the visitors are twin brothers who give public readings from Rilke on death: "It was as if their sickness had two voices."

Sickness? The ingredients of a happy summer holiday are presented from the start in an atmosphere of decay. Already in the first paragraph "two inspectors passed through an alley, examining the flow of sewage in the pipes." They are from a Sanitation Department which at first seems remote. It gradually looms larger and eventually takes over the town. We see no faces from this Department, hear no names. There is an impersonal and absolute power. Inhabitants and visitors try to believe everything is normal but cannot suppress their feelings of unease, anxiety, isolation. The town slowly crumbles as a civilized unit. "Telegrams and letters on epileptic receivers," the inspectors of the Sanitation Department were now spread all over the town. In the middle of May "a modest announcement" on the notice board invites all Jews to register with

theatre. One of the musicians says the inspectors from the Sanitation Department remind him "of marionettes in a play". Later, as a cold light breaks out from the north, the hotel waiters stand in a doorway like puppets on a stage. From the "railway station at the close of the book, at the end of hope, the marshalled Jews look back at Badenheim and see "the roofs of the houses like little pieces of folded cardboard". In this theatre of life the edges are precise.

Appelfeld never loses sight of the natural truth that life, however horrible, is always a succession of finite details. Importance is only a matter of judgment. Mizli receives a postcard; the conductor of the orchestra gets his bank statement; the musicians lie in bed eating chocolate. Those musicians could have come straight out of Kafka; and no doubt many will suggest that the menacing power in the background of this story owes much to the mysterious and compelling authority which

dominates the Kafka novels. But Appelfeld is more likely to have taken this from personal experience of a persecution Kafka was spared. He has one significant advantage over Kafka: there is in his writing no sign of hysteria. The last sentence of *Badenheim 1939* explodes with a controlled power Kafka never achieves. Appelfeld seems closer in his exact formulation to Isaac Babel, another writer whose experience of torment was more than mental.

Thomas Mann claimed that by writing *Death in Venice* he pointed in advance to the outbreak of the First World War. The general disintegration was made particular. The people of *Badenheim 1939* are rooted in their own time and place. We know about the Jews, we know about the Nazis. But this story could be about another time, another place. All pogroms, all the terror of enduring persecutions seem to unroll in this simple narrative about the arrival of doom. This is an extraordinarily beautiful and sad book.

STEVEN BAUER:
The Lastborn of Elvewood
237pp. 0 285 62503 9

STEVEN BAUER:
The Lastborn of Elvewood
237pp. 0 285 62503 9
Soyuzdetfilm. £6.95 each.

In *The Lastborn of Elvewood* a Surrey small-town actor, Ian James, obeys a mysterious compulsion to follow the Vicar and Mrs Hubbard into the woods one night. He witnesses an assignation between this odd couple, shrunk down to microchip size, local estate agent Miss Crawley, and the fairy King and Queen who are all receding to discuss the decreasing numbers and stature of the "little people". Ian is forced to help them change their reproductive fortunes for the better by exchanging one of their supernumerary males for a human baby girl. The Vicar, an aficionado of the black arts, drives him down to Cornwall where they meet an "Old Master" of magic who gives them a spell which will accomplish the kidnapping transformation. But the spell is defective and the terrified fairies dare not complain. Only Ian, who has by now developed a taste for declaiming the mumbo-jumbo and who thirsts for the "powers", has the courage to try to tackle the old magician and put things to rights. Readers who are inclined to be sceptical about all this are lulled by the sleeve-notes that Mr Haldeman has lived in England "a year" and has researched in the University of Pennsylvania Library. So it must all be true.

They might remain sceptical about Steven Bauer's *Soyuzdetfilm*, however, in which the moon is plucked from her orbit and falls victim to the evil powers of a giant maggot-like owl who wants to cover the world with darkness. We meet a satyr called Matthew, a boy called Derin, a raven called Deldre and a magic snow fox called Vera. Matthew is a satyr more for his hirsute appearance than his moral nature, and has no other likeable traits than his hunger for some fiery Arthur Seaton whom he might expect. He is, indeed, an exemplary one-parent family to the boy in his charge. With the raven and snow fox they set out on a quest to save the world from evil and darkness. The owl, finally, mercifully, falls like a feathery Caesar, to the

played by Tander; Jan Vang, a forester who is in love with Vera (both of them have rooms in the same house as Tander); and Krister, an old man for whom no one seems to have any use. Tander becomes infatuated with Vera, whom he adopts as a symbol of purity. Vera stands between piles of soiled laundry and the bleached sheets flapping in the wind and appears to Tander as one who has never been, and never will be, sullied. Hence, his profound hatred of Jan Vang, who loves (and is loved by) Vera. Tander, intending to kill Vang and so protect his fantasy, introduces a palpable sense of evil into the quiet village.

In one sense, the novel is an essay on the evil which can result from lack of understanding among people obliged to live together. Tander's wife has an intuitive grasp of his obsession with Vera, and thinks she might jolt him out of his silent brooding by writing on a village wall, under cover of darkness, "NOBODY CARES FOR JOHAN TANDER". Tander assumes this to be the work of Vang, whom he proposes to kill

that evening, announcing his intention to Vang the same afternoon. Meanwhile Krister is drawn to the bleaching yard, sensing that this evening he too will die. He would like a clean white shirt, but none of the villagers will oblige him. Krister, in his need, turns to Tander, who repulses him.

Tander also discovers that his wife was responsible for the writing on the wall. This comes as a revelation: Tander rescues himself from hatred, and seeks to explain himself to Vang and Vera. Vang and his friends, meanwhile, have banded together against Tander, and, fortified by a bottle of wine, they frog-march him to his death in the laundry.

Read as myth or fable, the events in the bleaching yard, and the novel as a whole, are an exploration of salvation in a social context, their tragic power lies in the frustration of individual efforts towards redemption. Vang's implied resolution seems to be a variation on the Great Commandment: if you cannot love your neighbour, at least be generous.

Life on the margins

By Philip Thody

HERVÉ BAZIN:
L'Eglise verte
284pp. Paris: Seuil.
2 02 006008 6

In his 1962 study of Hervé Bazin, Jean Anglade described *Au nom du fils* as "un roman si français qu'on pourrait le lire". Bazin's latest novel, *L'Eglise verte*, shows that it is his themes as well as the richness and variety of his language which make his world so quintessentially French. The trilogy with which his name will always be associated - *Vipère au poing*, *La mort du petit cheval*, *Le cri de la chouette* - is not only indissolubly linked to the French notion of *la famille*, it is also inseparable from the peculiarly backward region in the West of France in which Bazin was brought up; while the problem which lies at the centre of *L'Eglise verte* is one which not even our membership of the European Community has yet made very acute to free-born Englishmen.

Yet it is clearly one which worries the French, *et pour cause*. Indeed, I used to think when I first went there that nobody in France could remember who they were for more than ten minutes, which was why everyone carried a piece of cardboard with their photograph and *état-civil* on it:

they wanted to be able to fish it out of their pocket for a surreptitious glance every now and then as reassurance that they had not changed. But this interpretation of the continental obsession with identity-cards rapidly vanished when I discovered that you couldn't even draw money out of the bank without proving to somebody else who you were, and I agree with the retired schoolteacher, Jean-Luc Godion, the narrator of *L'Eglise verte*, that there are nowadays immense dangers in living in

notre monde ultra-identificateur où, grâce à l'ordinateur, l'acte de naissance ou de mariage, le casier, le livret militaire, le permis de conduire risquent d'être connectés avec notre dossier médical, familial, fiscal, scolaire, bancaire et, pourquoi pas? politique. . . .

It is not that Bazin expects these dangers to go away. The celebration of untamed nature which runs through *L'Eglise verte* is accompanied by a recognition that the bulldozer will put an end even to the marshlands of the West. Ecology, as Godion implicitly acknowledges by the description of how the countryside round him changes in less than a year, is bound to be a lost cause, however noble and justified a one. The anecdote around which the arguments in *L'Eglise verte* are constructed is far more the account of a defeat than is the plot of any other by Bazin novel.

Sixty-four-year-old Godion, wandering through the wild woods one day with his divorced daughter Claire, sees a naked man breaking his last links with civilization by throwing away his wrist-watch. A few days later, the handsome stranger is accidentally shot in the leg by one of the hunters who mistook the region, and is taken to hospital. But he has no identity papers and refuses to tell anybody who he is, so that Godion earns himself some unpopularity by letting him stay in his house when he is discharged. Claire, however, thinks it a good idea, and becomes the *bel inconnu*'s mistress. When a discovered detective eventually discovers who he is, the stranger takes off again on the 12.30 bus.

L'Eglise verte differs from Bazin's other novels in having no conflict between the characters, since Godion (a widower) doesn't mind his daughter being liberated so long as she doesn't leave home. All three are trying to live as far as possible on the margin of society (Claire runs her own book-binding business). It is a blatantly committed novel, the equivalent in fiction of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. It is also novel for lexicographers and gourmets. Did you know, for example, that *un scops* was a dwarf owl, that *l'écussonnage* was shield-grafting (for trees) and that you should choose *des Belle de Fontenay* for pommes de terre suaves, leaving *les binjies* for *purée* and *les Violin* for *ragoûts*?

Defective spells

By Richard Brown

LINDA HALDEMAN:
The Lastborn of Elvewood
237pp. 0 285 62503 9
STEVEN BAUER:
The Lastborn of Elvewood
237pp. 0 285 62503 9
Soyuzdetfilm. £6.95 each.

stabbing beaks of his corps of erst-while trusted falcons.

But the evil owl is not the only pernicious bird who presides here. As in Ms Haldeman's book, we feel ourselves to be under the unmistakable tyranny of the great and very probably crested poppycock. Both books are unmitigated fantasies, questionable as entertainment for children and rather disturbing when dressed up, as they are here, for an adult audience. They only make sense if we take the imagination to be at its strongest when it is not restrained by any meaningful contact with observable reality. But even then it is not the imaginativeness of these books that is striking so much as the drab conventionality of their landscapes of fancy. Placed beside them, *The Hobbit* would seem a *Middlemarch* of verisimilitude and

Watership Down as grand as *War and Peace*.

In *The Lastborn of Elvewood* there is at least an appropriate ambience of levity, but in *Satyrday* the cloying fantasy serves as a vehicle for a pious and self-fulfilling moral message which proclaims, as if this were remarkable, that an unspecified, abstract "good" is better than and will triumph over an equally unspecified and abstract "evil". There may be readers who can tolerate, or even luxuriate in, this cosy dream-world, but it is not so clear that they would not be better off without it. Entertaining academics may find material here for literary psychoanalysis and subtle sociologizing but, stranded on a desert island, with nothing else by way of reading matter to beguile the time, these books would probably be most useful in lighting the fire.

Criminal proceedings

ROBERT BARNARD:

Sheer Torture
186pp. Collins. £6.25.
0 00 231871 7

In fact, it's sheer embarrassment for Detective-Inspector Perry Trebowan when his father is found dead on a do-it-yourself strappado machine wearing a pair of spangled tights and he has to confront the appalling gaggle of eccentrics that make up his family. Extremely amusing, witty and ingenious, but possibly a little lightweight.

JONATHAN EVANS:

The Midas Men
314pp. Michael Joseph. £7.50.
0 7181 2043 4

Two books for the price of one here. The first is international politics, with the Soviet Union's hunger for grain nicely balanced by the US's desire to strengthen the dollar with gold. The second is big business, with James Collington battling to wrest control of gigantic multinational SAGOMI from the African-er faction headed by his father-in-law. The two are cunningly interwoven, but business comes off best, with sharp, clearly focussed detail contrasting to the fuzziness of the rest of the action. Characters are usual soap-opera quality, but the whole grips satisfactorily for as long as it takes to read.

TIMOTHY HOLME:

A Funeral at Gondolas
223pp. Macmillan. £5.95.
0 333 31838 2

In this second book about Inspector Peroni, that anglophile Neapolitan, the author has transferred his hero - known not without cause as the Rudolph Valentino of the Italian police - eastwards across the plain from Verona to Venice. Here he becomes involved in a quintessentially Venetian intrigue, encompassing illegal betting on gondola races, pinking, robbery, murder and the works of Goldoni. This is a much lighter, better constructed book than Timothy Holme's first novel, and he has filled it with an effective gallery of Venetian grotesques.

VICTOR CANNING:

The Boy on Platform One
177pp. Heinemann. £6.95.
0 434 10796 4

Young Peter Courtney has an amazing memory; together with his father gives demonstrations of his abilities; comes to the attention of an intelligence department; and gets caught up in an espionage operation. A pleasant, uncomplicated story: Victor Canning is writing well within himself, but even at half-price there are not many who can keep up with him.

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